2001

The Spirit of Teaching

Michael Brady
University of Southern Maine

Desi Larson
University of Southern Maine

The Spirit *of* Teaching

1999-2001

Walter E. Russell Endowed Chair in
Philosophy and Education
at the
University of Southern Maine

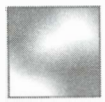
edited by

E. Michael Brady

and

Desi Larson

The Spirit *of* Teaching



The Spirit *of* Teaching

edited by

E. Michael Brady

and

Desi Larson

ISBN 0-939561-30-1

Dedication

To all those whose spirit of teaching
has as its source—and destination—
the human heart.

Table of Contents

Preface

The Irish poet and Nobel Laureate, William Butler Yeats, once wrote that he wore a ring with a hawk and a butterfly on it to symbolize the straight line of logic and the crooked one of intuition.

For decades writers and scholars explored teaching primarily through words and ideas aligned with the straight line of logic. Planning a coherent curriculum. Establishing learning goals and objectives. The science of syllabus construction. The architecture of clear and substantive lectures. The especially challenging dialectics of managing group discussions. Creating fair assessments. Yes, in the literature of pedagogy the hawk of the "how to" flies straight and true.

But there is also another tradition in the conversation about teaching, another line of flight, albeit one perhaps not as pronounced as the hawk's. Contemporary writers such as Parker Palmer, Eliot Eisner, Roland Christensen, and Stephen Brookfield have examined ideas about the role of intuition, the confluence of thought and feeling, the nature of the personal relationship between teacher and student, and other dimensions in the "art" of teaching. This book explores and celebrates this latter tradition, a line of inquiry which represents more the meandering and crooked flight of the butterfly.

In the fall of 1999, as part of Professor Michael Brady's work in the University of Southern Maine's Russell Chair in Philosophy and Education, a conference was organized on the theme, "The Spirit of Teaching." A request for workshop and symposium proposals was sent to faculty colleagues and members of the Maine education community. Questions to which potential conference presenters were invited to respond included:

- What motivates and inspires teaching?
- What values lie "at the heart" of teaching?
- Is it possible to talk about a "spirituality" in teaching? If so, how?
- What spirits haunt teachers and teaching?
- What stories, if any, does our teaching tell?
- What conditions diminish spirited teaching and how might we work to reform those conditions?
- In what ways does a spirit of learning inform a spirit of teaching?
- How may teachers keep spirited teaching alive over a long career?

Teachers working in a wide range of sectors—universities, technical colleges, K-12 education, social service agencies, public school adult education, and corporate training departments—responded to this request with conference proposals (some wished to work in teams and others individually). On April 8, 2000, more than 200 conference participants convened on the Gorham campus of the University to explore, discuss, and celebrate myriad aspects of the spirit of teaching.

This book consists of 23 chapters based on workshops and symposia that were facilitated at this conference. These are organized into four sections: the spirit of

teaching expressed in relationships, theory, practice, and story. Also represented in this volume are a wide range of writing voices—scholarly treatises, essays, memoirs, and even personal correspondence—indeed, the path of a meandering and crooked-flying butterfly. But perhaps a path of flight that will bring the reader closer to understanding the meaning of the spirit of teaching than which could be achieved through logic or science. We invite you to enter this spirit and join this flight.

Acknowledgments

We wish to express our gratitude to friends and colleagues who helped to bring this entire project—the conference and book—to life. These include all the workshop presenters and participants at the April 8, 2000, Spirit of Teaching conference. That conference was planned by a committee consisting of John Bay, Center for Teaching; Mary Collins, Department of Human Resource Development; Veronica Delcourt-Branch, Adult Education Program; and Carol LaMontagne and George Lyons, College of Education and Human Development Professional Development Center. In addition, the Professional Development Center's Dan Schorr prepared the conference program.

Financial support to underwrite the costs of both the conference and book came from a variety of sources. The Walter E. Russell endowment provided funds for this and nine other educational events at the University of Southern Maine during the past twenty years (see "A Brief Note About the Walter E. Russell Chair" at the end of this book). The academic deans from each of the schools and colleges at USM supported faculty and student participation in the conference. And the University's Center for Teaching provided a generous grant to underwrite the cost of both running the conference and publishing these proceedings.

Finally, we received invaluable support from important leaders at the University. USM President Richard Pattenaude helped this project in numerous ways including financial support and welcoming participants at "The Spirit of Teaching" conference. Christine Pratt, assistant to the Provost, administers the Walter E. Russell endowment and offered valuable guidance. And Julie Cameron and Libby Barrett in the Publications Office worked closely with us to transform typed manuscripts into the finished product you are holding in your hand.

We enjoyed the processes of reading, advising, cajoling, and otherwise working with our author-colleagues to bring this book to life. Among the greatest and most important things we learned from them through this experience is the breadth of their love for teaching and the depth of their compassion for their students. For the sharing of that spirit we are especially grateful.

E. Michael Brady and Desi Larson
Editors

Relationships and the Spirit of Teaching

A Grateful Student Writes to His Spirited Teacher

E. Michael Brady

In a letter written to a favorite teacher with whom he studied in the early 1970s, the author struggles to understand the meaning of the spirit of teaching. In the end he realizes the essence of this spirit lies far less in educational theory or instructional technique than in character and human relationship.

Dear Joe:

As you know from our lunch together in Baltimore last summer and the series of e-mails we've shared since then, I'm giving this "lecture," or at least a variation of that ancient form of public speaking, on the theme, "The Spirit of Teaching." When I selected this topic as my theme for the 10th Walter E. Russell Chair in Philosophy and Education at the University of Southern Maine, I didn't quite realize what I was getting into. I more or less felt that "The Spirit of Teaching" would, in the least, engage a series of lively conversations among colleagues, students, alumni, and friends. This was my primary goal because it has seemed to me that while we in the academy talk with one another about many important things, we seldom do so about this central and vital activity which binds us together as a community. I also thought that "The Spirit of Teaching" would set out a broad and generative enough invitation to yield a healthy number of workshop proposals to present at a conference I wished to convene while in the Russell Chair. These expectations have been met—and with abundance.

But I also naively thought that the subject of spirit and teaching would be a relatively easy one for me to make a speech about—this "lecture" being the one formal obligation that came with the Russell Chair. After all, I've been a college teacher for more than 20 years and before that had numerous experiences with other interesting and engaging teaching roles. At least I had this solid experiential basis from which to draw. I have read rather widely on the art and science of teaching, so I thought I would be helped there. And, you know from our long history together, of my interest in spirit and spirituality. So I believed myself to be well-covered for the purposes of writing my talk. How wrong can a man be?

The first thing I ran up against as I had begun reading specifically for this task was a line from one of Emerson's essays: "Of that ineffable essence which we call

Spirit, he that thinks most will say least." So there I was, caught in a trap. What could I dare say about "Spirit" that wouldn't indict me as a fraud? And then, not two weeks later, while reading a book about the spirituality of imperfection (in which I also have a strong basis in personal experience), I ran across this little story:

> The disciples were absorbed in a discussion of Lao-Tzu's dictum: Those who know do not say; Those who say do not know. When the Master entered, they asked him what the words meant. The Master said, "Which of you knows the fragrance of a rose?" All of them knew. Then he said, "Put it into words." And all of them were silent.

What is the Spirit? To provide an answer may very well mean one has misunderstood the question. Perhaps the best response, or at least the most honest one, is to follow the example of those disciples and remain silent. But then there would be no opening talk...and no conference...and no book following these events. Speech or silence? Truthfulness or deceit? A conundrum that philosophers and teachers frequently face, I suppose, and have since at least the time of Socrates.

I shall take the risk and speak to you, Joe, my friend and teacher. And hope that you will listen, as you always have, to the words I say as well as the words I choose not to say. For perhaps, like Meister Eckhart suggested almost a millennium ago, truth lies not in words themselves or the silences which surround words, but in that sacred and mysterious place where the two meet.

I choose to write to you to work out my thoughts and feelings about the spirit of teaching because I see you as one of the best teachers, and most spirited, I've ever known. I don't know if you realize that despite more than 30 years of knowing each other with our endless and endlessly engaging conversations, exchanges of letters and more recently e-mails, and sharing each others writings, I had you as a classroom teacher *only once*. That was your course in poetry taught as an elective in the School of Theology at St. Mary's Seminary and University-Roland Park. It was 1972 and, having just turned 23 and earnestly pursuing the pathway to priesthood, the same path that you had taken, also at St. Mary's in Baltimore, some 20 years before, I thought I knew the direction my life would be taking. As it turned out that semester I learned that I knew little about poetry and even less about myself. I was in for an extraordinary journey in learning. You became my guide.

The first thing I remember about your class was that we sat in a circle. Not the rows of neatly organized chairs that had dominated my classroom experience up to that point in graduate school, and before that in college and 12 years of public schools. We students weren't looking into the backs of other students' heads. We looked into each others' faces and eyes. Yes eyes—which is so appropriate because the eye, as Emerson wrote, is the first circle and a shape which is repeated in nature without end.

Years later I recall our having an animated conversation about John Neihardt's book, *Black Elk Speaks*. One of my favorite parts of that book is where the Lakota Elder and Holy Man, Black Elk, reflects on the power of circles. "You have noticed everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles...birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours...the sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The

moon does the same, and both are round... the world always works in circles and everything tries to be round..."

Everything, that is, except the world of education as I had known it—with its rows of students and boxes called classrooms and straight lines of thought poured from the full heads of teachers into the empty ones of learners. Until I met you. We sat in our circle and you questioned the presumed fullness in your head much as you asked us to question the presumed emptiness in our own. Our poetry class was considered to be on the margins of the curriculum by the erstwhile heady theologians who constituted the core faculty at the seminary—those former students of even headier European theological giants like Karl Rahner, Hans Kung, and Edward Schillebeecx. But in my view your class was not in the least marginal. It stood in the very center of learning and meaning-making in what was soon to become a luminous and transformational period in my life.

We read poems and talked about them. Sure, you had plenty to say as our teacher, although you often spoke with a sense of doubt, deference, and even humility. Questions were more important to you than answers. E.M. Cioran, the Romanian philosopher and poet, once wrote, "The fewer the solutions, the livelier the thought." Our class was lively indeed with thought. I remember you once saying that you mistrusted those who always seemed so certain of their ideas because your experience had suggested that, more often than not, "certainty" only meant being wrong at the top of one's voice.

The roundness of our learning experience included your belief that we not lock knowledge into separate disciplinary boxes but rather that each of us open ourselves to the possibility that many fields of scholarship could help us learn poetry. So you encouraged us to think broadly by painting lucid and lovely contexts in biography, mythology, history, and whatever other field of knowledge would facilitate our understanding, our standing-under the poems and their authors' intent.

I still have our course text, an anthology of 20th century American poetry entitled *The Voice That Is Great Within Us*. Through that book my classmates and I entered more deeply into the thought of writers whom I had at least heard of prior to 1972—Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, e. e. cummings, William Carlos Williams. And those into whose oceans of art I had not ventured even a single toe— Anne Sexton, Andrienne Rich, Richard Wilbur, William Stafford, and Elizabeth Bishop. And I'm thinking now what sublime irony it is that this book we studied together, one of the few titles I remember from the scores I read in graduate school, is indicative of perhaps the single most important mission I see myself having as a teacher, that is, helping my students discover and articulate the voice that is great within each of them.

While I recall you sharing ideas and stories about these writers and their work, I also remember that we students got to talk in class, too. A lot. We didn't just speak in response to a question you posed for which you already had the answer. That game was played elsewhere, but not in your class. You invited real thought and real response to questions that you, too, were exploring in your own thinking. In addition to ideas, you invited us to share our feelings about the poems we were reading and discussing. Sometimes we read the poems aloud and they were so beautiful I would feel the hairs on my arms standing to attention. I learned some years later while reading a biography of Emily Dickinson that she, too, would

experience a physical sensation when she read a good poem. In fact, recognizing her body's response to the words was her signal that what she had just encountered was indeed a poem and not some lesser form of writing. The hairs on my arms standing to attention was my signal that a poet's words, as I sat in our circle, had brushed against my life. It's a feeling I've sought again and again these past 28 years.

It was later in my career as a student, in fact two graduate programs down the road from my degree in theology, that I learned about democracy in education. Exploring the works of John Dewey, Eduard Lindeman, and Paulo Freire, I began to appreciate the enormity of the stakes at hand when a teacher empowers learners to think for themselves, to bring their personal experiences into the classroom as "a living textbook," and to have a voice. I would work hard in my own career as a teacher trying to develop skills to follow these great educational leaders' vision for good teaching. But it was in your poetry class that I experienced them first and first-hand. T.S. Eliot once wrote that as we become older, the past takes on a different pattern and ceases to be mere sequence. We had the experience but missed the meaning. The meaning of your approach to teaching only came clearer to me a decade or so later when I struggled to formulate my own educational philosophy.

I spoke of the hairs on my arms standing to attention. But you always seemed to be at attention, that is, attending to the small details in a poem and the little things in life that, when examined closely and for what they are, can reveal so much meaning and beauty. The former Library of Congress Poetry Consultant, Josephine Jacobsen, wrote a review of one of your collections of poems in which she noted your extraordinary powers of perception. And, I would add, compassion. Not only do you see things that most people miss, but you seem to care about them as well. I love, for example, your poem about the old broom you once saw at work in the hands of a custodian:

> Like a tattered regiment,
> loyal to the last,
> the straws of this old broom
> strive to serve, and strain.
> Left and right
> shot straws fall.
> Right and left
> the failing remnant
> sweep their fallen comrades
> dead away.

And the magic of the detail you were able to perceive in old brooms, or a wayside mailbox, or balloons at a circus was magnified when it came to your students. You saw each of us bringing a gift to our poetry class, something in our personality or intelligence or abilities to see and talk about the world. For some of my classmates this special gift was their ability to link ideas together into a chain of logic; for others it was a quirky sense of humor; still others were seen as bringing the gift of passion. You graciously accepted these offerings that some of us didn't even know we had until you pointed out our own gifts to us. By perceiving our individual strengths and paying attention to them—to us—you provided your students with a safe place to learn. Your class became a garden in which I felt I could

set roots and grow. Perhaps you had known about but had not told us of that beautiful and haunting line from the Talmud that many years later the African-American writer, Sapphire, chose as the epigram to introduce her novel, *Push*: "Every blade of grass has an angel standing over it whispering 'Grow, Grow....' You whispered, and we grew.

Yes—we grew from your whispering, but perhaps even more from your listening. As one who himself has been teaching now for some 20 years, I have come to know how powerful, important, and potentially transformative listening is. And also how rare and difficult. In an essay I wrote some years ago on the subject of education and mysticism, I commented how we educators celebrate too much the importance of speech—whether expressed in lectures, discussions, symposia, workshops, dialogues, or seminars—and celebrate too little the art of listening and the spirit of quietude and silence that listening requires. Sam Keen once suggested that every university should offer a course entitled "Silence, Wonder and the Art of Surrender." The course's aim? "It will aid students to develop an inner silence, to cultivate the ability to let things happen, to welcome, to listen, to allow, to be at ease in situations in which surrender rather than striving for control is appropriate."

By way of a novel I've recently read which was introduced to me by two former Russell Chair holders—Will Callender and Jerry Conway—I have come to a new awareness about the power of listening. The novel is *Momo* written by the German author, Michael Ende. It's about a little girl who, among other estimable talents, offers to her friends and acquaintances the gift of being an extraordinary listener. Here is one of my favorite passages:

> She listened in a way that made slow-witted people have flashes of inspiration. It wasn't that she actually said anything or asked questions that put such ideas into their heads. She simply sat there and listened with the utmost attention and sympathy, fixing them with her big dark eyes, and they suddenly became aware of ideas whose existence they had never suspected.
> Momo could listen in such a way that...shy people felt suddenly confident and at ease, or downhearted people felt happy and hopeful. And if someone felt that his life had been a failure, and that he himself was only one among millions of wholly unimportant people who could be replaced as easily as broken windowpanes, he would go and pour out his heart to Momo, and, even as he spoke, he would come to realize by some mysterious means that he was absolutely wrong; that there was only one person like himself in the whole world, and that, consequently, he mattered to the world in his own particular way. Such was Momo's talent for listening.

Listening is a way of attending. It is also a way of accepting. According to M. Scott Peck, listening is something we must do actively and requires hard work. Many people do not realize this or are not willing to do the work (and often I'm afraid I must place myself in this group). "When we extend ourselves by attempt-

ing to listen well," Peck writes, "we take an extra step and walk an extra mile. We do so in opposition to the inertia of laziness or the resistance of fear."

Because it both attends and accepts, listening is one of the most important ways in which we may care for and love one another. We listen with our ears, of course. But there are other ways. I recall reading about Johann Sebastian Bach's second wife, Anna Magdalena, commenting on her husband's eyes. "They were listening eyes," she said.

And deep listening, as you know, Joe, and have practiced with me and countless others, also happens with the heart. Not long ago I saw the metaphor, "a listening heart," in an essay by one of my favorite contemporary authors, Kathleen Norris. During our senior adult education seminar last semester, I asked my graduate students to think about this metaphor with me by way of a concept map. Words that branched across the white board as descriptors of a listening heart included compassionate, humane, nurturing, kind, tender, collaborative, authentic, respectful, empathic, loving. I have to think that these traits would greatly enhance any job description for a profession that depends upon the art of listening—musician, counselor, minister, social worker...and yes, teacher.

One outcome of your listening heart as a teacher was to encourage me to write. As a member of your poetry class I wrote brief papers intended to be personal reflections and interpretations. Because you were more concerned with creativity than criticism, my papers didn't come back marked all over in red ink like they did from other teachers over the years. You went out of your way to remind me of my successes, as small as they may have been at times. Your encouragement nurtured courage on my part to take risks—a bolder statement here, a transgression of grammatical norms there, even a venture into the creation of my own verse.

I would later learn that many people, even those deep into their adult years, are afraid to write because somebody—in many cases a teacher—had once told them that they did not write well. So this important part of their human voice went silent. It makes me so angry to hear this story of strangled writing repeated student after student, semester after semester. I say to myself, and to them: "Who gave your teachers this right to say these deadly things to you? To lance your spirit with the point of a pen?" I remember what you told me once about making such judgments: "There are two kinds of people in the world—the righteous and the unrighteous. And the righteous make the categories!"

What most of us need along the way as learners of writing (or of anything else that is great and difficult) is a teacher whose faith in our capabilities exceeds our own. Somebody to be our cheerleader. Somebody who places himself beside us rather than above us—a "guide on the side rather than a sage on stage," as the aphorism goes. Somebody who is also continuing to learn and struggling to open new horizons of thought and expression in his own work. Teachers are first and foremost learners. If we ever forget that we can quickly slide the slippery slope toward becoming fixed, certain, and eventually arrogant. The world needs little more of that kind of spirit of smugness, especially among its teachers.

One of the ways you and I have stayed in touch over the years is through sharing each others' writing. I love the way, for example, you mail to me an occasional newspaper op-ed piece you had written for *The Baltimore Sun* and perhaps toss into the envelope several new poems. And in a note penned into the corner

you'll ask about my work and family and invite me to send you some of the writing I've been doing.

I want you to know how impressed I am about the learning project you engaged in celebration of your 70th year. To read every play and every poem written by William Shakespeare! And then, not being content to merely read the great bard, you wrote an interpretation of his sonnets—all 154 of them. And several years before that project you undertook the study of another immortal writer and his work. If I remember correctly, you even took classes in Italian so you could read Dante's *The Divine Comedy* not only in its various English translations, but also in the author's vernacular.

With such an impressive learning agenda that has continued well into your retirement years, I've long felt you have managed to keep your priorities straight. And I can still hear you quoting Franz Rosensweig's pithy statement about priorities: "It's better to write than to read; it's better to write poetry than to write; it's better to live than to write poetry."

It is your actions as a priest, writer, and human being of deep conviction that speak to me most about the spirit of teaching. For one is less the authentic teacher if he says one thing and does another, if he avows beliefs yet fails to act upon them, if his talk goes one way and his walk another.

I remember situations earlier in your career when you ended up paying a heavy price for acting upon your deepest conviction. As a young priest you were on a fast-track to power. You were assigned to work in the central office, "the chancery," in the oldest and one of the most influential Archdioceses in the United States. Promoted to the rank of monsignor just several years after ordination. Given the responsibility by the American bishops to translate the Second Vatican Council's documents from Latin to English. Appointed editor of an important Catholic newspaper. You were in the middle of the Roman Catholic circles of power. You were barely 35 years of age.

Then came 1966 and you were increasingly troubled by America's role in Southeast Asia. You were one of the first voices to speak out against the Vietnam War and organized religion's complicity in it. You criticized the bishops for their lack of antiwar leadership. You received angry letters, some even suggesting that our country would be better off if you were exported to Mexico.

And then, around this same period, you took a strong editorial stance against a gubernatorial candidate in Maryland who had expressed racist tendencies. Many of your colleagues in the church supported this politician because he was Roman Catholic. You looked for and saw the higher principle. And then, not long after, you took perhaps your greatest risk in the challenge of authority. You happened to be on assignment in Rome on the very day Pope Paul VI published his encyclical, "Humanae Vitae," his famously divisive statement against birth control. You were so pained by this encyclical that you resigned your Monsignorship at the Vatican, which only got you into more trouble with your bishop back home.

From this time on, no longer working for the Catholic paper and other ecclesiastical bridges burned, you made your living as a kind of teaching and writing vagabond. Courses here and there at St. Mary's Seminary and Loyola College; writing projects which yielded modest royalties. No church appointments. No tenure track faculty positions. No financial security. Only a magnificent mind, splendid soul, and a once-every-so-often invitation to young seminary students to

join your poetry circle and talk about writing and life.

In recent weeks and months, while planning this conference and writing this "talking letter keynote," I've been reading quite a bit of the contemporary educational guru, Parker J. Palmer. He has published two books within the past 18 months, both about teaching. In one Palmer ruminates on what I think is a beautifully crafted definition of the concept of vocation: "The place where your deep gladness and the world's great hunger meet." Some 30 years ago, Joe, the gladness of your teaching spirit met the hunger of a young man searching for his own voice and place in the world.

In his other book, Parker Palmer suggests that teaching, at its core, is like nature's profligate seedings: "If we want to save our lives, we cannot cling to them but must spend them with abandon." When I read this I recalled a line from the poet William Stafford, to whom you introduced me in 1972. "Our life," he wrote, "We should give it away, this breath, and another, as easy as it came to us."

This grateful student thanks you for all that you have given away—to me, to the world, to the spirit of teaching itself.

E. Michael Brady is the 10th holder of the Walter E. Russell Chair in Philosophy and Education at the University of Southern Maine. It was in this role that he convened the conference from which this book derives. "A Grateful Student Writes to His Spirited Teacher" was the keynote address at *The Spirit of Teaching* conference on April 8, 2000. Mike is professor of adult education and was recently appointed Senior Research Fellow in USM's new Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. He holds degrees from the St. Mary's Seminary and University (B.A., M.Div.) and the University of Connecticut (M.S.W., Ph.D.). He lives in Gorham Village with his wife, Nancy, and their three children.

For Further Reading

Archambault, R.D. (Ed.) (1964). *John Dewey on Education: Selected Readings*. Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press.

Blakney, R.B. (1941). *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation*. New York: Harper.

Bode, C. and Cowley, M. (Eds.) (1977). *The Portable Emerson*. New York: Penguin.

Carruth, H. (Ed.) (1970). *The Voice That Is Great Within Us: American Poetry of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Bantam Books.

Cioran, E.M. (1995). *Tears and Saints*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eliot, T.S. (1963). *Collected Poems 1909–1962*. New York: Harcourt Brace & World.

Ende, M. (1984). *Momo* (Translated by J. Maxwell Brownjohn). London: Penguin.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.

Gallagher, J. (1983). *The Pain and the Privilege: Diary of a City Priest*. New York: Doubleday/Image Books.

Gallagher, J. (1998). *Statements at the Scene*. Baltimore, MD.: The Bench Press.

Johnson, T.H. (Ed.). (1951). *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

Keen, S. (1970). *To a Dancing God*. New York: Harper and Row.

Lindeman, E. (1989). *The Meaning of Adult Education* (originally published in 1926). Norman, OK.: Oklahoma Research Center for Continuing Professional and Higher Education.

Kurtz, E. and Ketcham, K. (1992). *The Spirituality of Imperfection*. New York: Bantam.

Neihardt, J.G. (1961). *Black Elk Speaks*. Lincoln, NE. University of Nebraska Press.

Norris, K. (1996). *The Cloister Walk*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Norris, K. (1998). *Amazing Grace*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Palmer, P. (1998). *The Courage to Teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Palmer, P. (2000). *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Peck, M.S. (1997). *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Sapphire. (1996). *Push*. New York: Vintage Books

Cultivating Care-Full Learning

Kristina M. Pelletier

This essay explores the relationship between care and learning by addressing three questions: How is care connected to learning? Why do students tend not to care about learning? How might educators begin to cultivate care for learning among their students?

Who cares about high school education? Who cares about learning math equations, grammar lessons, historical events, and scientific facts? Well, most students don't care. This isn't an earth shattering insight. Most educators and parents realize that students don't care about the intrinsic value of learning. Yet instead of addressing this widespread problem the tendency is to blame the students themselves: they aren't dedicated enough, they aren't driven enough or they're just too lazy. By blaming the students, this problem ends up getting dismissed without further question or discussion.

However, if we probe the relationship between care and learning we may begin to discover that the lack of care for learning is symptomatic of a major problem in education. To begin exploring this unattended problem, I will pursue three questions. First, how is care connected to learning? Second, why do students tend not to care about learning? Third, how might educators begin to cultivate care for learning among their students?

How is care connected to learning? Care can have many meanings, but in the context of this essay, care signifies that something matters to a person. Care is connected to general education because the world must matter to a person before they will seek to understand it. It is also connected to specific learning because care must be provoked before a person will desire to learn more about a particular topic. When a person cares about the other, then learning about it becomes a sought-after pleasure. The increasing engagement between the person and the other will create attachments that will foster bountiful learning.

The inner life of individuals is a mysteriously intricate, complex world of emotions, imagination, memories, experiences, ideas, reason, anxiety, mood, will, spirit, body, and so on. It is difficult to fathom the depths, interconnections, and mysteries of this inner world. This makes it difficult to adequately determine how or why something matters to one person and not to another. Since care is attached to this uncertain, complicated, unknown inner world, it can't be taught directly. However, teachers can provide conditions that are conducive to the cultivation of care

by allowing students opportunities to create connections between their own lives and the learning material.

Students tend to care about a topic to the extent that it engages their inner worlds. They will want to learn more about a topic in proportion to how much they care. Allow me to illustrate my point by offering a hypothetical scenario. Imagine that some students are expected to learn about Hiroshima in a history class. The teacher decides to divide the class into two groups. One group will read a scholarly article and the other group will read a personal story. The story will tend to engage the students' imagination, emotions, personal experiences, and reasoning. This engagement will increase the students' level of participation in the learning process by evoking multiple aspects of their inner life. However, the students who read the scholarly articles will not have their inner lives provoked to the same extent. Consequently, the students who read the story will tend to learn and care more about Hiroshima.

Learning is a constant process, an ability to go beyond what we presently know in order to encounter the world, the other, and ourselves, more fully. Learning flourishes in environments that are full of wondering, questioning, discussing, and thinking about what is presently understood. These conditions will often bring students to new understandings about themselves and others. This will lead them to see things differently, interpret the world differently, and think differently. This fresh new perspective toward life is the invigorating pleasure of intrinsic learning.

Learning requires the freedom to move from old understandings to new understandings. When learning is confined in a small square box called certainty, it becomes stagnant and boring. The freedom to understand occurs when educators and students release themselves from the chains of certainty. Once they realize that they don't know, and that their present understanding is limited, then they are free to explore and learn. Self-acknowledged ignorance is wonderful because it provides openness and a space for learning to move, grow, and transcend previous understandings. This is why Socrates, who claimed, "I know that I do not know," is still regarded as one of the wisest men in western history. Openness to possibilities, coupled with care, drive the desire to learn.

Why do most students tend not to care about learning? The reasons are many. First, students aren't given opportunities to understand how learning matters to their lives. When students ask educators why they should care to learn about a subject, such as math, it often gets quickly dismissed as an annoying question, and the student is viewed as *difficult*. Second, the material taught in schools is often kept at a distance from the inner lives of those involved. Students are seldom asked to bring their inner lives into the learning process, consequently meaningful attachments rarely occur. Third, schools do not allow sufficient time for students to wonder, question, explore, discuss, and reflect on topics. Fourth, students are expected to receive all the answers from their teachers and are constantly tested on how well these are remembered. Essentially, schools are places where students are required to go for all the answers to questions that they don't even have an opportunity to ask. This is a painfully boring process and often, intrinsically meaningless. Fifth, there is no place for the admittance of ignorance from either the teacher or students. Teachers and students are expected to know all the answers. Sixth, students do not generally care about learning because the conditions that are necessary for the cultivation of care are strikingly absent in schools.

These conditions are absent, because the form of thinking that governs school systems is in opposition to the creation of meaningful attachments between students and the material, which is necessary for care to occur. This form of thinking, which I will refer to as "systematic thinking," is rooted in the belief that it is important to separate the individual's world from the "outer world" for the sake of certainty. It is assumed that attachments will contaminate knowledge, and knowledge based on certainty is necessary for mastery and control.

This drive to establish certainty makes it necessary to separate the inquirer from the object of inquiry. As soon as these distances are established between the "world out there" and the inner world of the individuals, then both the subject and object are turned into isolated abstractions. These abstractions then become easy to control, master, and manipulate because there are no meaningful, unique attachments between individuals and the other. These abstractions and detachments become the foundation for education's system of learning. Under these learning conditions, students are not encouraged to engage their inner lives with the outer world. Consequently, students rarely have an opportunity to form attachments with the learning material, which are necessary for care to occur.

How might educators begin to cultivate care for learning among their students? Students would begin to care about learning if they were able to practice another sort of thinking, which I will refer to as "meditative thinking." Meditative thinking is an alternative to systematic thinking. Unlike the latter, meditative thinking encompasses careful attention, thought-provoking questions, unfeigned wonder, and complex thinking that is deeply attached to the student's own life. This allows students to participate in their own learning process. Through this meditative thinking, the wondrous mysteries of life are disclosed to the student's heart and mind. This awareness opens the student to new discoveries about their own possibilities, their own unique wonder, their own complex unfolding, and their own special connection to the world. This care will profoundly affect how students understand themselves, how they understand others, and consequently how they choose to dwell in the world.

How can educators realistically apply meditative thinking in their curricula? There is a very simple way, which extends far and wide throughout human history. Stories, poems, fables, and myths are literary vehicles that allow individuals to engage in meditative thinking. Literature has the potential to engage the student's inner life to the highest degree possible. In the midst of reading, the inner life of the students is necessarily provoked in order to interpret the story. This provocation of complex thinking creates a rich, vivid experience that will leave a deep impression on the student.

Literature, unlike any other medium, can connect the individual's inner world with the outer world. This leads to caring connections that will open the heart and mind to a fuller understanding about the other. However, requiring students to read literature is not enough. Teachers need to encourage students to wonder, explore, discuss, and question aspects of the texts, while respecting them enough to find their own interpretation. When this occurs, teachers will be providing learning conditions that will lead students to care about the intrinsic value of learning.

Literature can inform in several ways that escape the narrow confinements of systematic thinking. For example in Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times*, the readers are able to learn about the ramifications of an educational system, and society, that deny the complex nature of human existence. Through the engagement of their inner lives, readers are able to experience how this form of education affects human lives. This information can't come from systematic thinking because it is too far removed from the inner life of human existence. Consequently, in order to understand how our present "knowledge" affects actual lives, we need to turn to a medium that engages the inquirer's inner world with the inner world of the other. This is best accomplished by engaging in literature.

Personally, *Hard Times* offered me a rich, vivid experience that transformed my inner life, and continues to draw me toward caring and learning more about promoting a form of education that will attend to the inner life of students. In this particular story, I experienced life in Coketown, England during the industrial revolution. I was practically able to see, hear, taste, smell, and feel this other world. In a sense, the novel allowed me to take a quantum leap back in time and into myself. This meaningful experience provoked my imagination, emotions, and reasoning to such an extent that I began to experience empathy, sympathy, and compassion for the characters in the book. Through questioning, wondering, discussing, and reflecting upon *Hard Times*, I began to understand that many of the ethical problems in schools and in society, are partly caused by an educational system that tends to ignore the complex inner lives of students.

In summary, if teachers want students to care about learning, several steps can be taken. First, teachers can take more time to introduce the subject to students by allowing them an opportunity to question and think about its significance to their lives. Second, teachers should seek to learn more about their students. Students will care more about the class when they sense that the teacher cares about them. Third, educators should try to connect the learning material to the inner lives of students by engaging more aspects of it: emotions, imaginations, memories, and so on. Fourth, literature can enhance all care for all subject areas including math and science. Fifth, educators and students need to be to encourage acknowledging how little they know. This will allow room for learning to move. Sixth, schools should allow more opportunities for students to question, wonder, discuss, and reflect upon the classroom material. They need to be given time at least the same amount of time to engage in meditative thinking as is given to learning definitions, facts, and systems.

Currently, most students tend not to care about the intrinsic value of learning. Most wouldn't dream of associating words such a wondrous, fascinating, and inspiring with academic subjects. However, if students are able to engage in meditative thinking, reading, discussing, questioning, and wondering about the academic subjects they encounter, their care for learning will grow. As this care grows, phrases such as "fascinating math," "wondrous writing," and "inspiring science" will not seem so strange.

Kristina M. Pelletier is a philosophy major at the University of Southern Maine. She is primarily interested in promoting philosophy, the love of wisdom, in public high schools. Philosophizing, she contends, is necessary for fruitful learning and living. Kristina considers herself a wealthy person thanks to the many gifts she has received from those with a boundless teaching spirit: Professor Jeremiah Conway, Catherine Duclos, Wanda Whitten, and Patrick Doyle.

For Further Reading

Atkinson, R (1995). *The Gift of Stories.* Westport, CT: Bergin& Garvey.

Campbell, J. (1988). *The Power of Myth.* NewYork: Bantam Doubleday Dell.

Ende, M. (1985). *Momo.* London: Penguin Books.

Coles, R. (1989). *The Call of Stories.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Dickens, C. (1964) *Hard Times.* New Your: Bantam Books. (Original work published in 1854).

Heidegger, M. (1976) *What is Called Thinking.* New York: HarperCollins.

Nussbaum, M. (1995) *Poetic Justice.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Palmer, Parker. (1998). *The Courage to Teach.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Schlink, B. (1999). *The Reader.* New York: Vintage Books.

Sizer, T. (1998). Fields of Reading: Motives for Writing. D. Comley, D. Hamilton, C. Klaus, R. Scholes, N. Sommers (Ed). *What High School Is.* New York: St Martin's Press.

Spiritual Renewal through Transformation

Allen Lampert and Noelle Lord

3

The teaching and learning experience uniquely fosters instinctive curiosities for self-discovery. Teaching for transformation is a process that cultivates the necessary environment for spirit to be acknowledged and supported. It celebrates our deepest and most personal selves as participants in the learning endeavor. Inviting the whole person to be involved allows intellect to work in unison with emotion and spirit and creates a catalyst for transformation.

When the goal of learning is to encourage change and nurture the spirit within, how do teachers create the necessary environment to allow this to occur? What kind of relationships do we develop with our students? What consideration do we give to our own human spirit and the human spirit of others, thereby fostering transformation in those we teach and ourselves?

Often referred to as an art, teaching, like any art form, must project from deep within the individual. We approach teaching based on our personal experiences, intuition, values and beliefs. This is a natural invitation for the human spirit to participate in teaching and learning experiences. Cultivating an environment where spirit can be acknowledged and supported—where our deepest, most personal selves can be celebrated—opens the way for authentic transformation to occur. We need to acknowledge the whole person involved in each learning and teaching endeavor, allowing intellect to work in unison with emotion and spirit. This dynamic creates moments of discovery, enlightenment, and the emergence of inner truths. If we approach the craft of teaching with honesty and openness and allow the human spirit to come into our practice, the opportunity for great realizations occurs and our spiritual condition is much healthier and greatly enhanced.

Part of teaching is logical, centered around the effort to transfer intellectual knowledge, teaching, to our subject. Educating at deeper, more spiritual levels require flexibility and openness to let the human spirit emerge, create, and transform. A teacher's rigid adherence to curriculum objectives can choke the expression of these deeper recognitions within the individual. Learning experiences can

give rise to the realization that we have many other choices available to us. The opportunity as a teacher to support and cultivate these transformational experiences of learners is a gift and what many of us would describe as a calling and what keeps us coming back.

Teaching as Spiritual Renewal

We live in a society focused on quick solutions and immediate remedies. Teaching for transformation challenges these beliefs, as it calls for learning to be a reflective process, fraught with as much movement of sliding backwards as moving forward toward success. The teacher understands that there is neither a one-answer-fits-all, nor the ability to "fix" or "teach" in a manner that allows for instant solutions. These are not situations we can direct or control. It is a process that must unfold for the individual at his or her own pace, and all learning, even backward momentum, is progress. If we understand, and what's more important, embrace the fact that we are not always in control of events around us, we begin to attain a sense of balance in our work and teaching. We can relax into our teaching without the pressure of perfection and prediction, and simply guide and support learners in their learning journey. Curriculum objectives can still be achieved, in fact more so, when the spirit is honored and left to find its place in learning.

Viewed as a spiritual experience, teaching creates a deep connection between student and teacher, and students to each other. It is a fluid and open approach that maintains the tension to challenge and encourage change while helping students explore and identify their inner recognitions as they occur. The inner recognition is a very powerful experience, and serves to rock the learner's foundation as belief systems and assumptions are challenged. Their comfort zones and sense of reality are interrupted, and an opportunity for change presents itself. It is an intensely personal endeavor that encourages and enables all parties to learn from one other. Inner recognitions are brought on by an awareness that there is something else, other choices available, and is a stirring in the spirit that life has other possibilities. This is a disorientating experience and is often a painful one for both the learner and teacher. Great risks can be taken, and struggles with barriers to learning can be overcome. At times, it can seem like going backward instead of forward, but these downturns in learning histories become challenges to explore new opportunities and realize greater successes.

The teacher's ability to help foster the conditions necessary for learning, sometimes without any formal script or curriculum, separates the art of teaching from the act of teaching. We have each experienced that poignant moment when a breakdown occurs in the classroom—when nothing seems to be working—and we are subsequently left with having to rely on our most basic instincts to "teach." The dynamic between teaching objectives and the creativity required to keep things flowing can truly awaken the teacher within us, and certainly stirs the spirit! A teacher must sometimes make quick decisions based on unpredictable classroom events as they unleash themselves. Transformational teaching methods involve slowing the pace down in order to delve into these moments of new awareness and explore the possibilities with students. Opportunities arise to make teaching decisions that will encourage inner recognitions, and encourage critical reflection in learners based on these moments. The teacher must balance the appropriate level of questioning and challenging learners to assess themselves critically and the need to also nurture and support them during this difficult time. Successfully maneuvering through these rough waters of transformation brings both teacher and student closer together as partners in the transformational moment.

However, more important, teaching to the spirit embraces the inner recognitions that teachers realize in themselves as they begin to question the assumptions that underlie their foundations for teaching. It is the teacher's ability to challenge his or her own assumptions and reflect critically on his or her own approach to his or her art that constitutes an important part of the spiritual practice of transformation. What makes this exercise so powerful in acknowledging the spiritual side of teaching is that it places the teacher solidly in the role of learner, examining practice and reflecting on experiences. It is a direct analysis of what causes them to teach and learn the way they do. Teaching for transformation breaks down barriers that teachers encounter personally, and helps them better understand those they teach as they better understand themselves. The action of teaching and the realm of learning become less divided and the lines between teacher and student begin to fade and a learning community develops.

Only the awareness of the impact of spirit on the way we see the world—and the way these perceptions can change—can fully initiate transformation. The realization that new options and opportunities exist, and that learners have within them the power to make changes drive this process.

Creating a Sanctum for Transformation

In order for learners to feel safe in their journey to identify opportunities, the teacher must take the necessary steps to establish a learning environment that supports and encourages change—a sanctum for learning. There are deliberate approaches to this, including creating a learning environment that is open, comfortable and inclusive, but it would underestimate the power of this sanctuary to limit its description to the physical environment only. Beyond the classroom setting, a safe place for risk and learning to occur is carefully cultivated through the nurturing of interaction between teacher and student and students with students.

Teaching for transformation requires a high level of openness and vulnerability by the teacher, as well as asking for risk-taking behavior on the learners' part. Teachers open themselves to students and feel a direct connection with them. A critical step to facilitate this includes acknowledgment by teachers of their own fears and barriers. Teachers must be willing to have a sense of curiosity about themselves and their teaching, and therefore a willingness to change their own behaviors and attitudes. We really cannot ask anything of our students that we are not willing to ask of ourselves. If the student sees that the teacher is prepared to take risks and question their own assumptions, the student becomes more apt to begin a personal quest toward transformation. When teachers enter classrooms, not as experts in subjects, but as fellow learners engaged in a journey involving lifelong learning, we begin to capture the spirit within and support fellow learners in their own search for meaning. In this case, truth can indeed set both teacher and student free. When sanctuary begins to take hold, the lines of distinction between teacher and student become fluid, and the sanctum becomes an open space for learners to grow and experience change together as partners.

Teaching for transformation puts listening before talking. For many of us, this is a difficult lesson to learn. Our egos often demand that we share our expertise with our students, our fears urge us to retain our position of authority, and our assumptions call for us to control. These urges must be suppressed if we are to

participate actively as learners and foster a learning sanctuary. How often have we jumped in or cut-off a student believing we knew how they were going to finish a sentence only to discover later that the student had intended to take the conversation in quite another direction? As teachers, we must learn to check our egos at the door and remember that listening will foster greater understanding and learning for everyone. In a sanctum for transformation, everyone "has the floor."

Teaching for transformation, by its nature, can be a very messy business, emotionally and otherwise. As learners seeking to find meaning, we all use our life experiences and various perceptions—some joyous, others painful—to create various points of reference for ourselves. The deeper we delve into transformation, the more vulnerable both the learner and teacher become, and the greater the need for a strong sense of trust. Vulnerability gives rise to insecurity, fear and the reminder of painful experiences. The development of trust between student and teacher is a sacred relationship and must be present for transformation to occur. Difficult circumstances may come up from learners as they discover inner recognitions and new choices. These are challenging times for the teacher, too, because these situations are unpredictable and often emotional. The teacher must support both learners and process, even though they feel vulnerable and unsure. The creation of a learning sanctuary helps to promote this level of trust between all learners.

Ministering Transformation

It is not an understatement to consider this degree of intensity in our approach to teaching as a kind of "ministering" to learning. Working at the most fundamental and emotional human level requires a true sense of being in service to our profession and our students. Stepping beyond the act of teaching into the art of transformation, making room for the spiritual context in learning, is more demanding and difficult for the teacher. Only the teacher most committed to teaching and learning has the energy to work with students at the levels suggested here. There is a profound emotional commitment required to help students in this environment.

Teaching for transformation often involves facing an emotionally charged learning environment, especially during times when our own emotions are engaged in a struggle to teach to the moment. Our ability to remain calm and focused, and retain our role as that of mentor to learners will determine our success in facilitating change. Teaching for transformation promotes change, and revolves around a series of principles that considers a holistic, whole-person approach to teaching. It incorporates the acknowledgement of spirit within both teacher and student and encourages the role spirit plays in the ability to change. The ways in which we as teachers learn, and subsequently teach, has a profound impact on those we work with.

There is a desire within the human spirit to question meaning, to seek out truth, and to discover the self. Emotions and feelings, curiosity and reflection, are used to explore these relationships. This process captures the essence of teaching and learning as it discovers new relationships between the individual and the world around us. It is very difficult to question ourselves honestly and realize our old patterns aren't serving us; therefore, this experience needs to be guided and supported carefully during transformation. This kind of curiosity in ourselves is often squelched as we live out our lives, and as we experience less supportive

learning environments. It is our role as teachers for transformation to foster and support learners in their journeys of discovery, and to participate actively as passengers ourselves!

Learners often face a series of barriers to learning that they have brought along with them through their educational histories. Many of these barriers are experienced as confrontations, and are brought on by trigger events. Something in their current learning experience, and often a reaction to a teacher's approach, sets off a response that displays the discomfort and disorientation discussed earlier. These are great opportunities to prompt the learner to seek change. Teaching for transformation provides us with comfort in knowing that while trigger events can play an important role in the learner's decisions, they may be but one event out of many critical moments that have given the student the courage to change. Seen from this perspective, we begin to realize that we may play only one part in the student's transformation, and we can never predict when and how we might affect an individual's decisions to change. The essence of learning is transformation. It can happen in an instant, or happen slowly over time; it can be a gift we witness as a teacher, or we may never realize the transformation that might occur later in what the educational system often labels as "lost causes." Including the idea of nurturing spirit in our approach to teaching, we must speak to that part of the human spirit that yearns to find meaning in who we are and what we want to become. We must be willing to join this messy and difficult journey with learners, and have the patience in our ministering to wait out the tremendous rewards, and sometimes let go, realizing we may never get to witness some of them.

Charting Spiritual Renewal through Transformation

It is a continuous challenge to break away from an educational culture that is based on systems designed to organize and force learners to fit into structured models. Unfortunately, today's educational system still places constraints that threaten to extinguish the spirit in teaching. Teaching for transformation, as a spiritual and intuitive approach to learning, is diminished when pedagogic creeds are designed that place a premium on standardized testing, structured predetermination of student thinking, and an enforced, largely homogenous learning environment. As a result, teaching is reduced to curriculum and technique, control and prediction. When the goal of learning is to encourage change and nurture the spirit within, we must create environments and approach the art of teaching by connecting holistically with our students, ourselves, and one another in the teaching community. Denying the existence of life experiences in order to achieve curriculum objectives, suffocating emotion for the attainment of control, and attempting perfection at the risk of exposing our human fears and limitations denies the role these important human attributes play in influencing our behaviors. It inhibits and limits the ability to learn.

In its efforts to box individuals into tidy packages, the educational system continues to try to fit learners nicely along an axis. From the Bell Curve that emphasizes norm-referenced, summative learning, to the more progressive J-Curve that endorses result-based, formative learning, educators continue to attempt standardization of teaching and learning. All participants in the educational system, learners and teachers alike, are categorized and placed into an educational system that crushes, perhaps inadvertently, the spirit of learning. These traditional curves treat education as an objective-driven science, aiming for systematic categoriza-

tion and generalization.

We believe that teaching for transformation represents another type of curve that does not use fixed-time variables or a homogenous profile of learners as its goals. Learning is a lifelong journey, and is far from a linear experience. We propose a model of curve that is process-driven, based on the individual's lifelong journey in learning. There is a curve that allows for the natural cycles of learning and expresses more realistically a learner's path. Teaching for transformation introduces the S or Spirit Curve. The S-Curve more accurately reflects learning along a lifetime continuum. It represents learning more realistically, including all the ups and downs that come naturally with our learning experiences.

Talking with students who have experienced transformation, often a story of a difficult, tumultuous, and rewarding process is revealed. Often they use words like "gut-wrenching," "painful," "thrilling," and "exhilarating;" many times terming the experience as a "roller coaster ride." These students also have a keen sense of having come *through* something, usually to better times with greater understanding, to a sense of meaning and spiritual renewal.

The S-Curve allows for the holistic experience that takes hold within all learners. It allows for meaning to occur by relating immediate learning situations to the longer, larger journey we all experience. The S-Curve represents the individual, lifelong journey of learning. This is a journey that searches out meaning and discovery, one that renews the spirit for learners and teachers alike.

Allen Lampert is an adult educator working for Portland Adult Education where he develops and teaches a variety of programs. He also teaches part-time in the adult education graduate program at the University of Southern Maine. His primary interests are how and why adult learners change in their educational experiences. Allen has a master of science in adult education from USM and is co-author of the book, *Understanding What You Read.*

Noelle Lord divides her time between the plaster restoration business she and her husband operate and her interests in teaching, consulting, painting, and writing. She enjoys teaching a variety of adult continuing and professional development programs throughout southern Maine, and is most interested in the topics of human dynamics and communication, organizational leadership and development, and women's issues. She has a master of science in adult education from the University of Southern Maine.

For Further Reading

Cranton, P. (1994). *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults.* San Francisco: Jossey –Bass.

Cranton, P. (Ed.) (1991). *Transformative Learning in Action: Insights from Practice.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Eisner, E. "The Art and Craft of Teaching." In Reinhartz, (Ed.) *Perspectives on Effective Teaching and the Cooperative Classroom.* Washington, D.C.: NEA Professional Library National Education Association (1984).

Eisner, E. (1979). *The Educational Imagination: On the Design & Evaluation of Educational Practice.* New York: Macmillan (Chapter 9. On the Art of Teaching.)

Glazer, S. (Ed.) (1994). *The Heart of Learning.* New York: Penguin Putnam.

Highet, G. (1989). *The Art of Teaching.* New York: Vintage Books.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (Ed.) (1990). *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Palmer, P. (1998). *The Courage to Teach.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Palmer, P. & Livsey, R. (1999). *The Courage to Teach: A Guide for Reflection and Renewal.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Palmer, P. (1983). *To Know As We Are Known.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Teaching, Learning, Connection: The Relational Drama of Education

Kaitlin Briggs and Dale Barrett

4

This article about the teacher-student relationship grew out of an e-mail exchange between a college professor and a student from Zimbabwe, Africa, at an American university and is presented as a dialogue. The following ideas about the teacher-student relationship are explored: the importance of considering students, not generically, but as individuals; connection as a crucial starting point for learning; the importance of listening on both sides of the relationship; and the advantage of breaking out of the classroom within certain boundaries. Cross-cultural differences are also discussed.

One part of my job teaching at the University of Southern Maine in the Honors Program is to work with students in the process of preparing to do their undergraduate theses. Over a four-year period I have come to change my thinking and, thus, my approach to this work. In the beginning I focused almost exclusively on the content of the thesis, but over time I began to shift my attention toward building a separate and unique relationship with each student. With this change in orientation the number of students who undertook and completed these projects dramatically increased. This improvement led me to consider more deeply the teacher-student relationship, an often overlooked dimension within education. It has been my experience that there is always a place for the teacher's voice both within classrooms and within discussions about education, but often students' input and their perspectives are missing. I invited Dale Barrett, an older, nontraditional student from Zimbabwe to think together about the teacher-student relationship. We decided that an e-mail exchange would highlight our subject matter and allow us to present it as a dialogue. We could keep track of our conversation as well as take time to reflect upon what emerged. What emerged represents about a six-week period and has been edited somewhat for this publication, but we have tried wherever possible to maintain the integrity of our exchange.

February 20, 2000

Hi Dale,

I'm remembering when I first had you in class—and this initial impression has really been deepened I think as I've gotten to know you—I felt that there was a kind of respect coming from you toward "one who is a teacher." Does my impression ring true for you about yourself? If so, how is it that you've come to feel this respect? Being a white African male and schooled in another kind of educational system, do you think that this respect might be social and cultural in part? A function of a kind of history?

Take care, Dale, Kaitlin

February 21, 2000

Hi Kaitlin,

My respect for teachers in formal or informal settings stems from the fact that their roles, experience, and intellectual development have positioned them to deliver something from which I can gain. Some of the best teachers I've had are those who have never had a formal education. These teachers had a deep respect for their students. Unless there is respect, no matter what the setting, students will block the channels that bring about teaching. You see, teaching is a two-way street. I cannot learn if you don't teach, and you cannot teach if I don't want to learn.

Because I want to learn, I send out all the signals that establish respect, opening the way for the teacher to teach and for me to learn. However, I can break that bond; I can block that two-way channel at any time if I see that the teacher is beginning to dismantle the elements that shore up that respect. Now I may choose to ignore those signals and continue to show respect in the hope that I can continue to gain something out of the relationship. In our relationship the dynamic of respect on both sides is firmly in place, and this has facilitated the learning process and paid me handsome dividends.

In many cases, however, the enormity of the teaching moment is partially lost because the respect element in the equation is missing due to students' sometimes overriding obsession with the self and/or with the ego/power elements that the teacher exhibits. The respect I talk of emanates not from a position of fear or subservience, but rather from a position that is open to learning. Establishing this element of respect is a subject of its own.

I'm really enjoying this process and thank you for inviting me into your world. THANK YOU.

Talk to you soon, Dale

February 22, 2000

Hi Dale,

You wrote that some of the best teachers you've had never had a formal education. Who were they? What was the nature of your relationship? What was it that made them such good teachers? Just curious.

I've been thinking about my own history with teachers. I'm wondering if some of the reason I try to teach the way that I do is that throughout school (kindergarten through college graduation) I pretty much felt unseen, unheard, not "taken in" in any sustained, meaningful way by my teachers. I was one of the pack, one of the class. Parker Palmer uses the term "live encounters." I had no live encounters

with teachers for the most part. I do remember Cathy Portuges, my college French literature professor. Some of us got to know her in more casual settings outside of class, and I got to take in more informally the way that she thought (early 70s) socially and politically. I found it very transformative to know a teacher as a human being living her life, with ideas and engaged with activities as a way to bring forth those ideas.

The few important teachers I have had listened to what I was thinking, considered it. That was one of the starting point for our interactions. As they amplified my thinking (engaged it, took it seriously), I was really learning how to listen to myself. This is the model I use in my own teaching.

How's your vacation going? Must feel good not to have to come to Portland. Take care, and I look forward to hearing back from you, Kaitlin

February 24, 2000

Hi Kaitlin,

I was fascinated to read your account of teachers that seemed to connect with you. I echo your sentiments. Thinking, for me, begins when the teacher connects with me. When I believe the teacher is serious and committed to listening and is genuinely interested in helping me explore my thinking, I am immediately elevated to another level. This level is not only emotional but also intellectual, and it encourages me to excel. Excellence leads to curiosity and curiosity to excellence.

The teachers I spoke of without formal teaching credentials I believe had to rely on instinct, intuition, and a genuine desire to take students to new levels of experience. Who were these people? They ranged from those in the military, some from school, and others were mentors.

These teachers did not leave one unseen or unheard. My experience with my professors at the University of Cape Town are very different from the experiences I've had here, on the whole. I think the reason is cultural. The Honors Program, however, almost emulates my Cape Town experience in terms of really connecting with my teachers, but only with certain professors. I feel a closeness to you, Jan, and Jerry Conway, perhaps because I feel included in the loop to the degree that circumstances will allow.

As one professor told me the other day, "I'm not here to be your friend!" My immediate reaction was, just who the hell do you think you are? I felt like she was saying that connection is irrelevant. Now any interaction with her immediately puts me into a mode of extreme suspicion. That professor can teach me nothing. Any learning I do is through group study with other students and by asking her to explain only those issues that I desperately need to understand. Our relationship is now a force of circumstances. I have paid for the course, I need the course, and so can't drop it. A wonderful teaching opportunity is lost. Fortunately, I'm old enough not to allow her power and ego antics to dissipate my commitment to learning. We move on.

I've also sometimes wondered if because professors have so much invested in their degrees that they can reach a point (not always consciously) where they lose the ability to really communicate with those entrusted to their care. I have learned that simply because a person is highly educated does not mean they are good communicators or teachers.

Like you, I must agree that being taken in and included, listened to, and feeling connected is where teaching really begins. It must be an impossible task to connect with students when class sizes range up to 40, 50, and even 60 students.

Look forward to hearing from you. This exercise is so invigorating. To discuss issues of this nature with a professor signals your courage, your intellectual purity, and love for what you are doing. For me, it shows that you are at the threshold of uncovering some vital knowledge.

Thank you, Dale

February 25, 2000

Hi Dale,

Connection seems like a really important word. Since I read your e-mail, I've found my thoughts drifting back in time to your comment about your more informal learning experiences. I think my first teacher was my grandfather. I'd sit with him in his study. He in his red leather chair, his long legs crossed and spread out on a stool, the smell of pipe tobacco smoke in the air. I'd be sitting across from him in the green rocker. He wanted me to know things, practical things—my colors and numbers, the rivers of the world, the states and their capitols ("Delaware, Dover, D, D, D, " I remember him chanting)—but he always made the process fun. We'd walk around the house, slowly, then quickly, and I had to yell out the name of each plant as we went by—"hydrangea," "rhododendron," "forsythia," etc.

What was it that I really learned there at my grandfather's knee? I suppose that learning is dynamic, an exchange; there is the thing we are focusing on, but then there is this back and forth, back and forth. Connection. Exchange. It wasn't all just one way. I wonder what he got from our exchanges? I was also deeply affected by the quality of his attention in my direction. By dramatizing the importance of what we were doing with his time and energy, I think that, indirectly, my grandfather was showing me how to focus and concentrate on my own work

Unlike the professor you mentioned, the Greeks (although women and slaves were not citizens in ancient Athens and thus excluded) mixed politics, education, and friendship. Take care, best to your family and I hope you are well, and by the way, it keeps getting more and more interesting to think about these things together, Kaitlin

March 1, 2000

Hi Kaitlin,

I'm back. Work just buried me this week. I'm getting too old for this stuff. Connection seems to keep popping up as you say. I have given this considerable thought. It dawned on me that everything we do as humans requires that we connect: understanding, processing information, learning, maturing, self-reflection, growing...everything requires that we connect at some level in order to achieve.

Now, how does this connection work? Or what is it? What makes one thing connected and another not? How do we know if we are connected? With regard to teaching, it crossed my mind that connection is a fundamental action, activity, step...call it what we will. I'm convinced that it is the ability to transform, speak to an understanding, embrace together a state, a position, a space with another person on a level that really reaches that person. To do that one has to be really connected to one's intuition. (Here's that word connected again.)

Intuition is often overridden by formality and organization. Pedagogy more often than not blunts intuition.

I'm reminded of Einstein's comment that imagination is better than education. He certainly did not advocate that education was not important. Rather, I believe he was calling us not to ignore our more intuitive side as humans, or become so rigid that we suppress our imagination (connection).

How many teachers really try to bring to the fore their intuition? I was in a class the other day where one of the prescribed books was on awakening one's intuition to deal with daily life. I thought it interesting that since your last e-mail I had been thinking about the topic of intuition so strongly. And then I should bump into this professor who is lecturing (I'm hoping connecting with her students) on the topic.

Intuition is extremely difficult to engage. During my war days my intuition was at an extremely heightened position; I often marveled at what would happen as I followed my intuition. Further, as an officer I was responsible for teaching people to stay alive. I definitely connected as my life relied on others remembering and synthesizing what I taught them.

I leave to go back to Boston tomorrow afternoon. Look forward to your reply. Speak to you soon, Dale

March 6, 2000

Hi Dale,

Got your e-mail last week, but I was off to Connecticut on Friday and now it's Monday and I still haven't gotten back to you. Swamped is a good word. Exhausted. Somewhat bogged down at the moment.

In one of your last e-mails you mentioned the difference between your educational experiences here in the United States and those at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. That sounded interesting. Could you talk more about those differences?

Intuition. Connecting with oneself and one's own impulses, sense of things. Intuition and teaching. To follow one's intuition means being willing to pay attention to the here and now, to give up the lesson plan. The word that comes to mind is "presence." I find before a class I have to gather myself, almost like a performer or actor who is about to walk out onto a stage. Improvisation is essential. Obviously a script is necessary, but that must go hand in hand with a sense of mystery: what will happen? What truths/insights might be revealed? Learning as explorative rather than prefabricated. I consider the thinking and writing process I teach in my courses as a way for students to get lined up with their own thinking, their own impulses, their intuition, their felt sense in relationship to their own language. Can I hear myself thinking? What am I thinking about? Where is the feeling/meaning, the pulse beat, what I care about?

It seems that, in the process of getting educated, students learn to *disconnect* from themselves. Going to school means getting properly socialized/normalized—and in many ways that means *not* paying attention to oneself. But how can learning really occur if our fuller, deeper selves, our spirits, aren't engaged?

Wish I had more energy at the moment. But for now at least I've gotten back to you. Kaitlin

March 12, 2000

Hi Kaitlin,

Thank you for your e-mail. It must be wonderful to go to New Orleans at this time of the year. I'm sure you will have a wonderful time.

Let me respond to your question about the differences in learning environments between here and Zimbabwe. Having been educated in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and now here I have had somewhat of a unique experience. I grew up in South Africa but was then sent to boarding school in Zimbabwe. The South African system was quite different from that of Zimbabwe because Zimbabwe was under the direction of the Ministry of Education in England. All our teachers were from England and most went back on retirement.

The learning environment in the classroom in Zimbabwe was centered around discipline and achievement. Teachers were distant. You learned what you were told and you responded only when asked. But outside of the classroom, the teachers were a lot more open to discussion and questioning; there students and teachers interacted more closely. I know this brought out the best in our students. Victoria High School was a small school with a student body of only 180 students. Yet we were one of the top schools. The principal was especially motivated to establish relationships with the students. By that I mean teachers were not simply teachers but in time were seen as mentors and even friends, although the word friends must not be misconstrued as friendship in the conventional sense; rather, these friendships clearly had boundaries, but those boundaries were not inflexible.

Although a poor student in my earlier years in South Africa, I excelled in Zimbabwe, gaining my "colours" in drama, oratory, and rugby. I was head boy of my sports house and hostel and was also a school prefect. The reason for my achievements was that my teachers believed in me and mentored me.

In my case, moving from South Africa, where the system was based on intimidation and coercion, to Zimbabwe was a step that saved me from total failure. Let me explain. South Africa hurt me. I was emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically wounded. Learning in Zimbabwe was healing. My teachers were healers. They soothed, added healing balm to my wounds.

For a teacher to heal requires that he or she be an exceptionally sensitive and intelligent person who is well-schooled in pedagogy but also who is intuitive and wants to be connected. Teaching has to be one of, if not *the* noblest of callings.

Teaching, learning, gaining knowledge is a very complex process. My son, who is learning disabled, only learns through healing. Nowhere is this more strongly borne out than in his case.

Healing in this instance refers to amongst other things a process of building. This process is very delicate. It requires just the right mix of talents and skills and is different for each student.

Students here in the United States have better critical skills than I think we had as students in Africa because students here are taught to question and analyze—as individuals—everything. While this is a wonderful trait, it also can be debilitating in the sense that group or collective study is for the most part ignored.

After serving in the military in Zimbabwe, I went on to college at the University of Cape Town, one of the few liberal institutions in South Africa at the time. There we consistently had group discussions about everything that pertained to our course material. These discussions were held with students and regularly with

our professors. We would meet for coffee to conduct academic gymnastics and sparring sessions with each other and with our professors. It was amazing to see the bonds that developed and, more important, how much we learned from those cafe gatherings.

Hope you enjoy your trip. Be careful please, Dale

March 19, 2000

Hi again Dale,

I thought your comments about teachers and friendship were very interesting. Some element that comes close to something like friendship seems important, but as you suggested not in the conventional sense and within certain boundaries.

I've been doing some interesting reading, in particular, rereading Paulo Freire's classic work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This excerpt really got my attention: "There is no such thing as neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of students into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."

Anyway—time to go. I have to pay for computer use here. Take care, Kaitlin

March 25, 2000

Hi Dale!

How are you doing these days? Hope the past week or so has gone well school-wise, family-wise, self-wise, in "all wise" (said with southern accent).

I loved hearing about your schooling experiences: their collaborative/community based nature, outside the classroom experience—at the University of Cape Town, wasn't it?—and how students are taught in the US to question and analyze everything, but as individuals so to speak. I agree with you that in many ways the collective is ignored here.

Our dialogue has gotten me thinking that interconnection between teacher and students is a positive/desireable dimension within teaching/learning but one that is backgrounded for the most part, considered irrelevant, not important—the "what" of a course of study is always more important than the "how." To my mind, for the classroom to be an exciting place (a living, shifting and changing, pulsating learning community) interconnection is an essential component.

Our dialogue has gotten me thinking about larger questions. What is a teacher? A student? What does it mean to "go to school?" How we think about educational process might determine how we come to think about the teacher-student relationship. I do think that much of education involves socializing/enculturating/normalizing students into "the logic of the present system" and that the traditional, accepted script for the teacher-student relationship reflects and helps to organize that agenda. Freire describes the present educational system as "a banking system"—students come in empty and teachers make knowledge deposits into their empty accounts. But suppose the teacher's work were to guide students in the process of turning their collective gaze, their thinking, and perhaps ultimately their actions, to the world in order to transform it, or a piece of it, as Freire so eloquently states? In this case, the "how" of the classroom might become important in a way that it isn't within a traditional model.

Teaching is a practice, but thinking about how this practice works, in particular the teacher-student relationship, has gotten me thinking about theoretical matters, a natural movement of thought, I suppose.

Take care, Dale, Kaitlin

March 29, 2000

Hi Kaitlin,

Well this has been a week of chaos. Thus the reason for my silence. Much to my disgust I withdrew from a class. My first ever. Talk about disconnection. There was a total chasm between me and the professor. At no level was there any common ground. The further I got into the semester the further I drifted apart. Quite sad as far as I'm concerned.

Strange that we are discussing the teacher-student relationship as my course was turning into an exercise of frustration and ultimately anger and deep disappointment. That two humans could be so far apart is often frightening. There was no motivation for me to excel. Any work I did was from the discipline instilled in me during the military.

The moving of teacher and student to common ground was nonexistent. What events or triggers could have brought me back I don't know. Could I have been brought back? I doubt it in this instance.

I sometimes think back to my children and the times that I influenced them the most, when they learned something that to this day still sticks. I realize that teachers can't have a one-on-one relationship with every student. But we do have to rethink how we can draw out of every individual his or her very best qualities.

Standing in the gym the other day, I was eavesdropping on a group of students discussing certain professors. Admittedly this was not a very deep discussion, but it did bring home the fact that there were issues that deeply disturbed the students. Again, of primary importance was that the students felt that the teacher didn't care. He or she was getting a salary every month and teaching was just another job. It was going through the motions. This is more prevalent than would appear at first.

Teachers sometimes teach by template. That is, they have been schooled in a certain tradition and they then apply those principles to everybody. However, each student is totally unique with a myriad of different cultural, social, emotional, and gender issues. How can we ever hope to overlay a template onto all these different individuals and sustain any depth of experience?

Teaching as we know it is limited to the classroom. What effect does this have? Would it be more effective to extend this teaching environment? How best could this be done? What framework or structure would it take? Do the existing roles of teacher and student need to be rethought? What limiting effects does the existing structure have on the teaching process? What preconditions and tacit signals are in place that blunt learning?

Well, I hope you are still enjoying your stay and that you are getting some good work done. Speak to you soon, Dale. . . .

Kaitlin Briggs, Ed.D., is an assistant professor of interdisciplinary studies in the Honors Program at the University of Southern Maine. She teaches "Thinking and Writing in Honors" courses, directs the undergraduate Honors thesis work, and is currently working on a book about "relational teaching."

Dale Barrett was formerly an Honors student and an economics major with a focus in international affairs at the University of Southern Maine. He is currently working on a novel about the ten year liberation war in Zimbabwe, Africa, and has joined the M.B.A. program at the Arthur D. Little School of Management at Boston College.

References

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & J. M. Tarule (1986). "Connected Teaching," from *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* (pp. 214-229). New York: Basic Books.

Brodkey, L. (1989). "On the subjects of class and gender in "The Literacy Letters." *College English*, 51 (2), 5-141.

Buber, M. (1970). *I and Thou*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum Publishing.

Freire, P. (1998). *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach.* Boulder, Colorado: The Westview Press.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom.* New York: Routledge

Parker, P. (1998). *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Tompkins, J. (1996). *A Life in School: What the Teacher Learned.* Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley

Nota Bene: We would like to thank Wanda Whitten, editor of *The Maine Scholar*, for her help editing this manuscript.

Kindred Spirits

Jerelyn Grusy

5

The quest for spiritual growth and fulfillment is never-ending. Those who are teachers experience a parallel quest for such growth and fulfillment with their students. Unfortunately for some this opportunity goes unheeded and unnoticed. Those who demonstrate a genuine spirit of teaching are not necessarily taught to do so in education courses. Rather it is a choice which is made consciously, day by day.

Teaching is sacred work. I know that as surely as I know anything. But I must clarify that statement. It's not the teaching *per se*—not if by teaching one means orating or pontificating or simply being the bearer of information and data. That is lecturing, or speaking, but it is not teaching. But use a definition based on the equal exchange that occurs between learner and teacher, or more exactly, learner and learner—as it should be—and then we have a sacred moment. Not all teachers or students would buy that definition or espouse it. Not all teachers or learners are believers or practitioners of teaching that speaks to the spirit and emanates from that source. There are those who, as in any job, go through the motions, collect the paycheck, seemingly unconcerned about the progress of their students or the repercussions of their actions.

But at its best, teaching is sacred—sacred in the sense that knowledge, learning, and discovery are all allied with the sacred. Whenever or wherever there is hearts-and-ears-wide-open communication and connection between people, there exists a sacred moment. In my life as a student, I have experienced such moments, as I have in my life as a teacher. Somewhat frightening when one thinks about it. An awesome responsibility. I think of that at times when a student I encountered comes to mind and I wonder, "Where is he now?" Or whatever happened to… ?" Did I do everything I could have to encourage, to listen, to breathe on the spark? Or, on the other hand, was there an unanswered question, a missed opportunity, an unconscious ignoring of a request? So many, many faces and minds and hearts. Each one deserving to be heard, each one seeking answers to the questions and dilemmas we all have faced. It is our commonality, this journey, this life. We are kindred spirits. The word kindred implies a family relationship and that it is indeed. If one recognizes the spirit that resides in another as resonant with one's own, a first step is taken to oneness, to understanding. As Toltec tribe members

greet each other, so may we, "You are my other self." I recognize your spirit as my own.

When a person decides to become a teacher, he or she invites challenges into one's life—long hours, mountains of paperwork, frustration with policy and administration. But among those dour bedfellows are their more rewarding mates—moments spent with students who question and are thirsty for answers. How fortunate to be the one to observe the look of understanding and comprehension as it happens on the face and in the eyes—the joy of it all. How lucky one is to see the moment when a subject that was heretofore as incomprehensible as hieroglyphics, is understood. There are the glimpses of a student's excitement at the pure joy of discovery, and the unquenched desire to seek out meaning

So what ingredients are required, what process must happen in this making of a teacher—a teacher who not only practices one's craft, but lives and breathes the craft, does so with all one's might and being—the total spirit. I recall when I was "practice" teaching a supervisor told me that I was a "natural teacher." I remember being very flattered, more so because I didn't believe there were that many things I did in a "natural," easy way. But perhaps his praise was more about technique than about touch. More about sensibility than the senses.

But I digress. What then is the preferred methodology of instilling spirit in a teacher? Does one meditate and spend hours in solitary living? Is there a book of rules, a stringent guidebook for becoming a teacher of the spirit? I think not. It has much more to do with how a person is and does than what a teacher has learned in formal education and training. One evolves as a teacher as one evolves as an individual. In fact, the two are intricately and irretrievably intertwined. Even the most inexperienced can discern those who do and those who do not. It is very safe then to say, that one does not learn to "be spiritual," as a teacher or as anything else. It simply is a matter of choice—one chooses to prioritize and value the development of that quality in oneself, a lifelong choice. And inevitably, one's career choice whether it be teaching or bricklaying, will be affected. Teachers have the good fortune, the advantage, as it were, to touch the hearts and minds of many, and in so doing, inspire the search in countless others.

Teaching has lasting effects. Memories of those who opened our hearts and minds do not easily fade. Neither do those who chose to be remembered for what they didn't do, or for what was cruel and unkind.

Yes, a "teacher touches eternity." While this sentiment may be overused, it is nonetheless true. At my age, 30 and 40 years after a connection with spirited and spiritual teachers, I still remember, if not their words, the recognition, the openness, the "being present" that was offered to me. The impact on my life is beyond measure. They *have* affected my eternity as I teach others, as I raised my daughters, as I play with my granddaughter. And on it goes.

Mr. Clark, my sophomore English teacher was bespectacled, bookish, possessed an inherent nerdy charm and seemed somehow out of place at our small rural high school. He looked more a part of Oxford or some preppy eastern private school staff. He was the one who first made me believe that I could write. Recognition, a voice, awareness of myself, the immediate world and the WORLD, those were his unwitting gifts to me. As were his words scrawled in a school yearbook which I will never forget even though the fate of that yearbook is now unknown: "Organization skills have you not, but writing skills you possess in abundance." Only words,

but the awkward teenage girl who read them knew the power of words and reveled in a new found self-awareness and sense of validation. I am sure he was unaware of the impact his moment's writing had on me. And yet, maybe he knew all too well.

The spirit of teaching is about that, about reaching out to someone in need of understanding, yearning to discover self. The spirit of teaching is about being aware of another human being's search for the why's and how's of this life, being able to admit to not knowing all the answers and accepting that another, even a fledgling student, may know more than himself.

I was fortunate to have other teachers who practiced their vocations and allowed us as students to find our own ways. Mrs. Fox, my junior English teacher, was plain, her brown hair never quite found a style, of a color that is often defined as "mousy." Fine-boned, she possessed a birdlike appearance which encouraged some not too creative or too sensitive students to name her, "Sparrow." She spoke with a lisp, cause for more derision from some, and often seemed weary, whether from a long commute, or as the result of a tiny frame burdened with advancing pregnancy, I don't know. But when she read from Shakespeare or Dickinson, she was ethereal; she was inspiring, her face lit from the inside out. I inherently knew she was someone who understood how a poem or story could make me feel ice cold or touched by a sorrow that I could not put into words.

She was much more than a silly name; how sad that some could not see that. Perhaps they never really saw her as I did. I remember her, too, for choosing me, not someone on the cheerleading squad or one always picked for teams, but me, to have a lead in the senior play and to be co-editor of the school newspaper. She saw me as not just the unprepossessing young woman in the second seat, third row, eleventh grade English class, 2 - 2:50 p.m., but as more. And I was more than that. And every student in every class is more than they may seem to be.

Mr. Clark and Mrs. Fox were not as old as students sometimes believe their teachers to be. But they were not fresh faces out of college either. I believe it is not necessarily the young who embrace and practice the spirit of teaching with the whole heart, the entire spirit. In fact, I believe the young may be more inclined to "go by the book," or to emulate a favored teacher. Before new teachers "find" themselves, they must rely on what they saw and felt and heard from others. The one who recognized possibilities and put the mirror up to see for one's self, to see beyond the obvious, underneath the surface.

The spirit of teaching invites an openness, a willingness to listen, an observing eye, a responsive heart. Teachers often have been taught to orate, to spew forth facts and dates, and concepts, and formulas, and on and on and on. All the while students, empty vessels that they are, sit in straight rows furiously writing, filling page after page of what could just as easily been gleaned from a textbook. Some choose to nap the class time away or daydream, or plan some hilarious mischief, anything but give attention to the opportunity, the moment from which much may be learned. And in some cases, why should they? Nothing is being offered, no sense of curiosity is being satisfied, no opinion is being sought. But teaching rooted in and of the spirit does not know lectures, does not know a religiously followed syllabus.

Teaching of and in the spirit can throw out the lesson plan for the unexpected question. It can recognize pain on an adolescent face, can draw the quiet out of a student, can spot a spark of interest, or of talent in the class clown trying so des-

perately to drown it out.

Teachers who practice from the spirit must draw upon a personal need for self-knowledge and desire to evolve. From recognizing that need in one's own life, it can more easily be seen in the lives of those students encountered. Teachers cannot entirely separate themselves from their other lives. Teaching is more than an extension of what they live—it is who they are. It is not automatic; it does not just come from the mind and stored knowledge. It comes from heart and soul and with it, the realization that there are questions that have no answers and questions which have many answers. And the realization that there is more gray than black or white in countless situations, the awareness that sometimes rules should be broken or at the very least, questioned.

If "work is love made visible," as the poet Kahlil Gibran first said, then one should not have to search to see or feel the love, the compassion inherent in that work. The spirit of teaching suffers much, works hard, gets burned out, but comes back for more—seeking yet another opportunity to see in one more student what someone else has missed.

But that spirit itself has to be nurtured; one must keep oil in the lamp. A teacher who is actively involved in developing spiritually, who recognizes the importance of that development, also seeks to foster that development in the student. He or she seeks to allow the student to find one's own way, to seek the answers to the questions that matter most. It's a much more difficult process than simply lecturing from notes and text, much more time consuming, but ultimately, all that really matters. Emperor's names and dates of conquest, and unused formulas, they are soon forgotten. But self-discovery and memories of that "aha!" moment are not.

I feel fortunate to have had teachers who believed in me, who believed in my self-worth and their own. They encouraged and supported me in my own quest of becoming. How important it is that I be the same for someone else. I may never know if I have been successful in that endeavor. But I will continue to seek, to observe, and to listen in my encounters with future students. I am their teacher as they are mine. Indeed we are kindred spirits.

Jerelyn Grusy graduated from Western Illinois University with a B.A. in English and from Northern Illinois University with an M.S.Ed. She has taught middle school language arts, high school English, English as a second language, GED, and citizenship classes to adults. Recently, she has been involved with adult literacy and job skills training in a substance abuse treatment center. She sees herself as a perpetual learner.

Education Inside Out: Teaching and Learning as a Spiritual Journey

Robert Atkinson

The concept of education inside out is explored as an approach to learning designed to draw out what lies within, thereby nurturing wholeness. The basic assumptions and goals of an education inside out are discussed, as are its four functions (the personal, the interpersonal, the transpersonal, and the cosmological). Also addressed is the role of authentic relationships in an education inside out, and how the teaching-learning process can become a sacred journey in which all involved share important responsibilities.

The original meaning of education, from the Latin *educare*, is to draw out what lies within. Yet, the standard approach to education is to have the learner acquire knowledge about what is out there, in the world around us. If the concern of education were equally learning from the outside and from the inside, and if the inner self, or the core of one's being, were valued and nurtured as much as acquired knowledge, this would make for a balanced education, and possibly allow the inner self to become a source for understanding what is personally sacred.

The overall goal of an education that would draw out what lies within, coupled with the standard approach, is the healthy growth and development of the whole person. The result would be not only a balanced education, one that nurtures both the inner and outer selves, but an approach that sets in motion a transformational process through which we come to see ourselves and the world very differently. As we become more aware of our inner self, we begin to recognize that we are indeed connected to a larger whole.

Rumi, the 13th century poet, wrote in his epic work, the *Mathnawi*, about two kinds of intelligence. The first kind, he said, is acquired intelligence, that which we develop from collecting information from the traditional sciences as well as from the new sciences. This is the intelligence with which we are ranked and judged based on our competence to retain information. The other kind, as Rumi sees it, is more complete and closer to our soul. "This other intelligence does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid, and it doesn't move from outside to inside through the conduits of plumbing-learning. This second knowing is a fountainhead from within you, moving out" (1988, p. 36).

Not only is Rumi identifying this internal fountainhead of knowing that yearns to be expressed, is complete within us, and naturally seeks to move outward, from us to others; he is also acknowledging an unnecessary separateness that has been created, giving us only partial vision when we see with only one of the kinds of knowing. We will not be able to be, or give, who we are in our fullest unless the two are both developed. This task of uniting the two is what Robert Frost (in Palmer, 1993) writes about:

> But yield who will to their separation,
> My object in living is to unite
> My avocation and my vocation
> As my two eyes make one in sight.

The two kinds of intelligence are like our two eyes. If we rely only on the eye of the mind to form our image of reality, our world view, and our lives, we will be incomplete. If we open the other eye, the eye of spirit, the eye of the heart, we will not only be able to draw out what lies within, but we will also find realities to which the mind's eye is blind. As Parker Palmer reminds us, "either eye alone is not enough. We need 'wholesight,' a vison of the world in which mind and heart unite" (Palmer, 1998, p. xxiii).

It is in part because of the separation of the two kinds of intelligence that there are both good times and bad times in the classroom, for both teacher and student. There are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy, as Parker Palmer says, while at other moments, the classroom is so lifeless or painful or confused—and we are so powerless to do anything about it—that being a teacher seems to be a sham.

So, how do we learn to see with both eyes at the same time, so that neither one gets out of balance with the other, and results in such confusion? How do we make the two kinds of intelligence one? This is the age-old struggle, finding the balance, seeing the whole picture. Yet, all the world's sacred traditions are ultimately concerned with this, they are built upon the essential truth of oneness, unity, and wholeness.

As Thomas Merton has put it, "There is in all visible things an invisible fecundity, a dimmed light, a meek namelessness, a hidden wholeness. This mysterious Unity and Integrity is Wisdom, the Mother of all, *Natura naturans*" (1989, p. 506). This is a good definition of wisdom: learning from the mind combined with learning from the heart, or soul. This is where the hidden wholeness lies. We can not expect to find wisdom through only one kind of intelligence.

There *is* a process of thinking the world together, according to Parker Palmer, of bringing the two parts together as one whole. We have done quite well at thinking the world apart, though this has given us great power in analysis, in science and technology, in binary logic, and in either-or decisions. Yet, it has also given us a fragmented sense of reality that destroys wholeness and the wonder of life. Palmer applies the concept of paradox to explain how wholeness encompasses the parts. "Truth is found not by splitting the world into either-ors but by embracing it as *both-and*. In certain circumstances, truth is a paradoxical joining of apparent opposites, and if we want to know that truth, we must learn to embrace those opposites as one" (1998, p. 61).

Nurturing an Education Inside Out

This process of uniting the two kinds of knowing is what I refer to as *education inside out*. We can think of Rumi's first kind of intelligence as learning from the outside in, and his second kind as learning from the inside out. Both are essential and necessary to a complete education, to seeing all of reality, and to gaining wisdom. Because we have so long been in the binary, split apart, outside in mode of learning, more emphasis now needs to be placed on the inside out approach to bring about the desired balance, and a union of the two kinds of knowing.

When the second kind of knowing is acknowledged, and honored, we create a bridge to the spiritual life, and we create an approach to teaching and learning that makes education a sacred journey. This idea actually connects to a strong thread from ancient times. Long before there was any formal public educational system to teach children what was most important, there were traditional rites of passage, one for each life cycle transition. These were essentially community-based entrance ceremonies into progressively advancing stages of development which required the individual undergoing the transition to successfully carry out certain coming of age feats. These rites proved to the individual and the community that the inner strength and resources necessary to assume the new roles and responsibility of the next status or stage were present. Since traditional rites usually fully tested one's abilities, and brought about a new knowledge of what lies within, along with a higher level of confidence and assurance, they ultimately brought about the realization of one's fullest potential (van Gennep, 1909). This is an approach to learning that values the knowledge that comes from within.

And this is what initiation rites and an education inside out have in common. They both support the process of coming to know one's inner self, one's true identity, and one's place in society, by bringing about a decisive elevation of consciousness. Through the process of being guided to face and draw out the potentialities within, the person relies on inner resources to achieve something that had never before been possible. Education inside out, like initiation, is a process of discovering the self within, understanding its nature and needs, and making that inner self the guiding force that directs the course of one's growth and development. Without this balanced approach, we may end up in adulthood as Hesse's Demian:

> I was a full grown man, and yet I was completely helpless and without a goal in life. Only one thing was certain: the voice within me, the dream image. I felt the duty to follow this voice blindly wherever it might lead me. But it was difficult and each day I rebelled against it anew... I wanted only to try to live in accord with the promptings which came from my true self. Why was this so very difficult? (Hesse, 1965, pp 98-99).

The answer to his question takes us back to Plato's cave, and the allegory of seeing the light. From that dark underground dwelling where men saw nothing of themselves or each other except the shadows on the wall that were reflections of the fire behind them, one of them is released from the chains that bind him or her there and eventually makes his or her way out into the light of the sun. It takes some time for him to adjust to that new and alien world of light, but, Plato argues, gradually it is seen as a new truth, and he takes pity on those he left behind in the

dark cave. But if he went back down into the cave and tried to describe the world above, at best he would not be understood or believed; at worst, maybe even endangered for trying to tell them something that would threaten their existence as they knew it. Plato compares his allegory to education, noting the possibility that there resides in each person's soul the faculty to learn. This inherent capability is what needs to be nurtured and pointed in the right direction. Education must acknowledge that we already possess an inner vision, and that the benefits of drawing out from within what is already there is self-knowledge and wholeness.

Assumptions and Goals of an Education Inside Out

Students are more often supported or encouraged when their learning is of the outside in approach. Since the inside out approach has been neglected for so long, it now deserves more attention in our schools in order to develop a more well-rounded, whole person at a younger age. Activities that promote creativity, cooperation, and self-discovery are what would contribute to an education inside out.

We can identify a set of basic assumptions that would characterize an education inside out.

- Each person is created with a physical and spiritual nature.
- Education becomes joyful when it becomes an adventure, or a quest of following a voice within.
- Our quest is primarily one of realizing the harmony and unity of our dual natures.
- We are continually learning; since education is a life-long endeavor, it is important to begin early listening to the teacher within, so we will be connected to our own source of wisdom.
- There are many ways to cultivate an education inside out, and develop our full potential.
- Wholeness is achieved when an equal emphasis is placed on the education of the spirit, on what lies within.

An education inside out also has many important goals:

- To instruct the young in the traditional values and accumulated wisdom of the culture. Initiation rites fulfilled this goal in the past. Today such an understanding is just as essential.
- To draw out what is latent within. Education's role can be to ensure that a proper balance between the inner and outer is maintained. This will also ensure the development of the whole person.
- To develop a sense of reverence and contemplation.
- To eliminate prejudice and promote racial and gender equality. When we discover our inner nature, we recognize a greater similarity and connectedness with others.
- To develop worldmindedness. This is an attitude, a point of view, that results from a deeper awareness of ourselves in relation to the larger whole.
- To encourage the independent investigation of truth. By balancing the inner and the outer, education can enable each individual to verify for him or herself what is true and what is false through personal experience, which also brings us closer to the larger whole.
- To develop a sense of service. Responsibility to others arises out of the knowledge that we have the potential to control the course of events

around us. Service to others is the response of the higher self to the understanding of our deeper purpose.

Functions of an Education Inside Out

Just as there are four classic functions of myth and ritual, an education inside out would have similar functions. First, is the *intrapersonal.* Teaching and learning, from an inside out approach, guides the individual through the life course, while fostering an unfolding of the self. It can center and integrate the self, through gaining a clearer understanding of personal experiences, feelings about them, and their meaning. Second, is the *interpersonal.* Teaching and learning as a spiritual journey fosters and deepens a relationship between all involved in the process, while affirming, validating, and supporting our own experience in relation to others, and helping us to understand our commonalities, as well as differences, with others; it ultimately fosters a sense of community by establishing bonds and maintaining our place in the social order of things. Third, is the *transpersonal.* Learning from the inside out brings us face to face with the mystery of life; it awakens feelings of awe, wonder, humility, respect, and gratitude in recognition of those mysteries around us. These feelings help us to participate in the mystery of being. This approach to learning takes us beyond the here and now, beyond our everyday existence, and allows us to enter the realm of the spirit, the domain of the sacred, and the realm of the eternal. And, fourth is the *cosmological.* Finally, learning from the inside out can help us arrive at a total image of the universe, a fully formed world view, where all parts, including ourselves, fit together as a whole. This learning helps us understand the universe we are part of, how we fit into it, and a sharper picture of what our role in the world might be.

These assumptions, goals, and functions of an *education inside out* address the needs of the whole person. They go beyond the scope of contemporary public education. At its foundation, the inside out approach follows the three phases of folk education as found in traditional rites of passage. The first two phases (separation and initiation) are primarily inner oriented, and the third (return) is outer oriented. First, there is a receiving, then a giving back. What is drawn out from within is ultimately shared with others. Such sacred rituals served to strengthen and unify the community around each life cycle transition.

Education for wholeness (learning from the inside out) is also a sacred journey consisting of three phases: seeking knowledge, attaining knowledge, and applying knowledge. It means not only exploring and discovering more about ourselves, but also understanding and doing something about our responsibility to benefit others. In promoting the education of the spirit, we promote the essential nature of the person, and the human needs to be creative, to value values, and to be a co-creator of a world worth living in.

The need for an education inside out is greater today than ever before, to offset the trend toward specialization. Ways of carrying this out in the classroom are many. They would incorporate the various approaches and techniques of the meditative and creative disciplines. Teachers wishing to educate from the inside out can follow their own inner voice and their own inner wisdom to support and encourage their students to find *their* own inner voice and direction. There may be as many ways to apply an education inside out approach within our present educational system as there are teachers in the system. Education inside out offers a

model that awakens each person to their own sense of self, while leading also to a heightened sense of responsibility to others.

The Role of Authentic Relationships in Facilitating an Education Inside Out

A journey implies movement, having a goal, a destination, and being directed, if not guided, by someone, or something, that can lead the way. A spiritual journey implies having a sacred destination for which two or more establish a bond, an authentic relationship, through which the destination is made sacred, and achieved. This exists not only between teacher and learner but, in a classroom setting, between all learners with each other.

Contemplation and meditation may be acts of solitary discovery, but teaching and learning as a spiritual journey is always an act of creative and cooperative discovery. This requires, first and foremost, the establishment of authentic relationships between all those involved in the journey. The essential ingredient in an authentic relationship is altruistic love, or at least unconditional positive regard. This type of relationship rests upon a value hierarchy in which the human being is the highest created value in existence. (The corollary to this is if we do not perceive the human being as the supreme value, then we could use others as a means to our own ends.) We cannot treat others inhumanely if we truly perceive them as the supreme value in creation (Hatcher, 1998). This authentic relationship creates learners that become consumed with and engaged in an ongoing lifelong learning process, which carries its own inherent and intrinsic rewards. Teaching and learning as a spiritual journey not only results in an education for wholeness, founded upon the exploration of experience, but equally important, establishes the challenge of building genuine and authentic relationships.

The practical implications of all this are also many. Teachers need a thorough understanding of the role self-concept, self-image, *and* self-knowledge play in determining school success first, and vocational success later. Teachers must relinquish the notion that they are the source of all knowledge; they should forge a partnership with their students in a shared learning process, demonstrating by their example that they, too, are learners. Students need to be encouraged and guided in acquiring a balanced set of capacities that constitute academic, vocational, and spiritual learning. Students would thereby feel liberated in seeing themselves as directors of their own learning and as individuals who can determine the course their lives will take. Education must build on universal principles. It must be relevant to the true needs of the community, and to the individual, while contributing to a sense of unity in diversity. In order to do this, teachers must be restored to their traditional role as the transmitters of morality, builders of character, and the custodians of culture (Baha'i International Community, 1990).

Robert Atkinson is a professor of cross-cultural human development and director of the Center for the Study of Lives at the University of Southern Maine. He is the author of five books, including *The Life Story Interview* (Sage, 1998), *The Gift of Stories* (Greenwood, 1995), and *The Teenage World* (Plenum, 1987). His primary areas of interest are psychospiritual development, life stories, personal narratives, storytelling, and the impact of cultural traditions on life cycle development.

References

Baha'i International Community (1990). *The Teacher's Situation: The Determining Factor of a Quality Education for All*, Statement presented to the United Nations World Conference on Education for All by the Year 2000, Thailand.

Merton, T. (1989). *A Thomas Merton Reader*, New York: Doubleday.

Palmer, P. (1998) *The Courage to Teach*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rumi, J. (1988). *This Longing*, Putney, Vt: Threshold Books.

Frost, R, (1993) in Palmer, P. *To Know as we are Known*, San Francisco: Harper.

Hatcher, W. (1998). *Love, Power, and Justice: The Dynamics of Authentic Morality*, Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Hesse, H. (1965), *Demian The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 98-99.

Plato, *The Republic.*

van Gennep, A. (1909/1960). *The Rites of Passage*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Reflections on the Spirit[s] of Teaching Past

Paul G. Caron, Jan L. Hitchcock,
Mary Anne Moisan, and W. Bumper White

7

The authors, from varied disciplinary backgrounds, critically reflect on the significance of the spirit[s] of teaching they have each encountered with one of their own teachers. Common themes as well as areas of difference emerge from these accounts. A case is proposed for the utility of this exercise in educators' ongoing examination of their own embodiments of the spirit of teaching-learning.

Introduction

One of the many ways that "spirit" can be defined is as the essence that both shapes and transcends a particular personal existence. From this perspective, to the extent that our teaching has spirit, we cannot help but be connected to teaching that came before us, including that which we experienced with our individual teachers. As we reflect on what we think and hope characterizes the spirit of our own teaching, there is an opportunity to consider these earlier embodiments and the relationships with these—obvious, subtle, or perhaps even paradoxical—that we now carry forth. As we connect and reflect on the powerful images of specific teachers and teaching past in our lives, such questions emerge as: "What from these earlier experiences are part of the 'spirit' of my teaching? How do I now know it, or not? Act on it, or not? And *should* I? What implications for future teaching, mine and others, do these reflections hold?"

In this essay, four colleagues from Lewiston-Auburn College at the University of Southern Maine, each with varying histories of teaching and being taught, critically reflect on the significance of the spirits of teaching we have encountered in our own educations. We hope these reflections may serve as an introduction to an exercise that we, as teachers, might all profit from: connecting with and critically reflecting on the Spirits of our Teaching Past.

Jan Hitchcock

My disciplinary background in psychology and anthropology explains in part my interest in the internalization of earlier experiences, of images from our indi-

vidual and collective pasts. Having held a firm intellectual appreciation of that general point, I was still caught off guard by the vividness with which the persona and spirit of my early teachers can now come into focus. The first "spirit of teaching past" came to me—instantly and powerfully—when I engaged directly in this process of looking for "spirited" images. It was not a teacher who I would have named if I had been asked, more conventionally, "Who has most influenced your teaching?" It was my 10th grade English teacher, Miss L. The image holds constant: a woman of indeterminate middle-age, dressed in tailored wool suits—a stern, daunting teacher we had all been warned about. She was the first "serious" female high school teacher for many of us. In fact, recalling my roster of high school teachers, I wonder if she might have been my *only* female teacher, grades 9 through 12.

She was known to be extremely demanding; and, of course, that reputation led her not to need to exercise many corrective or disciplinary actions. For instance, "You will not do that again" was enough to have me never significantly exceed recommended paper lengths for essays to be read aloud in her class. I remember quaking during the start of the oral presentation required for her class, she now sitting in the classroom before me, conspicuously taking notes. In terms of the content of her teaching, her unit in which we dissected the manipulations of Nixon's "Checker Speech" sealed my commitment to the importance of critical thinking and of scrutinizing communication for its varied levels. She introduced us also to the world of classical mythology, though I must confess that the details of our foray into that subject did not similarly take hold.

My first level of connecting to a spirit of teaching past must lead me to question the degree to which I may have internalized and carried forth this female "ideal" of a stern, intellectually demanding teacher committed to critical inquiry. What about those undertones around power? Around gender? And does the Miss L. "spirit" as I have called it forth now actually represent an effective approach to facilitating the development and application of the critical thinking I so value? These are some of the first set of questions generated by this exercise for me.

But before I finished with this foray into the Miss L-spirit there was another, more startling layer: After the first round of memories, I realized that one reason why the spirit of Miss L's teaching came so powerfully to mind and heart was not just her daunting persona and high standards, or her instilling of a commitment to critical thinking, but because she was also the only teacher I had encountered during those years who used the word "love" when she spoke of her students. The associated image here is also very clear: she was walking in the middle of the classroom, between the aisles of our desks, talking about a context I do not remember, and then she said to us, in an only slightly different nuance of an otherwise familiar mix of mission and exasperation, "You *know* we love our students, don't you?"

I never discussed this with my classmates. It seemed almost as intimate and embarrassing, almost as vulnerable-making as a range of other topics that could newly mortify 15-year olds in the late 1960s. At the same time, I had an immediate deepening appreciation of the complexity of this woman and her teaching: She was about serious intellectual inquiry, no-nonsense "tight ship" discipline, *and* love. This startled me now also because I don't think I would have ever used

that word in response to a more straightforward inquiry into the core elements of my teaching....

How much does that form of conviction and connection—love—underlie my own teaching, including the perhaps less than fully articulated associated expectations and frustrations I encounter? I do wonder if it relates to how I have felt, in what I consider to be my most successful moments in teaching, that perhaps I have been able to facilitate a new step in a student's thinking that also makes a difference to their "whole person." And if this component of my experience with Miss L. that I have carried forth is indeed a core motivation and mode for my teaching, then what are the implications for my efficacy in larger classes or with students with whom I may not to be able to individually "connect"? Should I endeavor to make more conscious and explicit the spirit of Miss L's love in my teaching, and/or, now recognizing it, should I also be more alert to guard against potentially over-"personalized" involvement and expectations? A partial rejoinder to this last concern, a closing response from this process of reflection, is the recognition that Miss L.'s love for her students, and its impact, did not seem dependent on the experience of a highly individualized relationship. She was not, for instance, a teacher I ever considered visiting or maintaining any sort of contact with during the ensuing years—until now.

I include only this one spirit of teaching past from my own history; the picture is made more complex by the variety of other individual teachers who also left at least as comparable imprints with me. My primary intent is to suggest through this brief case study the potential utility of a mode of reflection on our teaching, the following back—and forward—of powerful, still energized images from experiences with our teachers, in order to examine more consciously the ways they may influence the spirit now of our own teaching.

W. *Bumper White*

As a professor of education, the process of looking at one's own teaching within the context of our own experiences as learners, to help us to improve our pedagogy as professors, is very real, near and dear to me; it is what I do on a daily basis. As an educator with classroom experiences (K-16) and more recently as a teacher of teachers, I have found the process of this very personal and reflective examination to always be very illuminating and constructive.

I have often used an exercise similar to this process, as a starting place for my first-year pre-service education students to get them to begin thinking about their own teaching from within themselves. In the exercise, students are asked to reflect on a specific teaching-learning episode from their past with an emphasis on identifying memorable traits of the teacher's teaching. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, in many cases more negatives than positives about effective teaching are brought forward from their subconscious to their conscious, a significant comment in itself about the "spirits" that bless or haunt us in our own teaching (and perhaps in our own ability to learn). However, for the sake of this paper as I try to make the connections and reflections that impact one's teaching, the focus here is on positive embodiments of effective teaching and from a single individual "case study," as opposed to creating a composite from many.

Of all my teachers the one whose spirit I have tried most to embody in my own teaching was Mr. W. who I had for (and I am dating myself here) something we called "shop," but would be considered "technology" now. I had Mr. W. for

shop from 4th grade through 8th grade. Shop curriculum included woodworking, electricity, metalworking, mechanical drawing, and many things in between. This is subject matter that is often considered a frill and/or a marginal area of the curriculum, but without which I would not be the person or teacher I am today. What was especially important about this experience in shop was the way in which the teaching-learning process played out.

Upon recent reflection about Mr. W.'s teaching, I have been able to make important connections about what he was trying to do as a teacher that I did not realize as a student. As a professor of education, not only can I better appreciate the wisdom of Mr. W.'s ways, but I now possess a nomenclature with which to describe the teaching qualities and dispositions that made him so effective. Thus, my language here is my own, not his. Here are four major beliefs (in many ways interrelated) from his spirit that I had connected to experientially that have implications for my own teaching with regards to "best practice"—effective pedagogy.

Primacy of having a stimulating and safe learning environment

Mr. W. saw his primary role as helping us to learn as opposed to just teaching us. It was an active two-way process wherein we had a responsibility. He knew that for us to be truly successful we would have to be empowered and confident as learners. The learning environment was "safe" in all senses, from the use of tools to a genuine willingness to let us try new things. And of major import, he knew to provide us with the materials and tools we needed to learn most effectively.

Minds-on hands-on learning

Mr. W. knew that in order for us to learn through the process, regardless of the outcome of our individual project, we needed appropriate background knowledge. The curriculum and our learning was a process approach in which we constructed knowledge through inquiry and problem-based learning—figuring stuff out on our own with his thorough mentoring to guide us.

Attaching personal meaning to learning

Not all students are motivated by the same things, regardless of the curriculum required. Mr. W. was astute about this and allowed for shared decision making about the curriculum. One way he did this was to encourage us to develop our own projects, use personal designs, creativity, and customization.

Relevancy

As professors, our connections with our subject matter are often so internalized that we forget that for our students the connections to the real-world are less apparent. Mr. W. allowed us the opportunity to put the pieces together in a way that gave us both meaning and understanding to the world outside of our classroom. Through appropriate applications of our knowledge, we could see the relevancy of what we were learning and apply it to real world situations. His curricular approach was integrative and interdisciplinary in nature; it was holistic. He kept us actively involved in the meaningful process of design and redesign using all of our knowledges and intelligences in reaching our goals.

Having thought about this and written it all down, I am somewhat haunted by the question: Is this how I really teach? Are these "spiritual" elements that I have chosen to embody from my earlier experiences the most important and most central to my own teaching with regards to meeting the needs of my students effectively? Or do they have more to do with my romanticized and idealized view of who Mr. W was through my eyes? Or is it more related to who I am, for example, my own personality, as opposed to meeting the needs of my students?

It is one thing to identify and reflect upon elements of one's beliefs about effective teaching; it is yet another to act on them on a regular basis. As I alluded to in my introduction, there is always the possibility that distance exists somewhere between the ideal and the real of what we set out to do each day in our teaching. As we say in the teachers' room: Do I walk the talk? How do I know? What data do I have that support my thinking (data-driven decision making) in teaching?

Mary Anne Moisan

As a relatively new teacher in an academic setting, moving directly from clinical practice to the university, I seem to be consumed with the nuts and bolts of teaching: from simple aspects like writing syllabi and learning new teaching strategies, to more complex activities like developing courses and revising the master's in occupational therapy (MOT) program curriculum. I have even articulated a philosophy of teaching, in writing at least. So I jumped at the chance to take a step back, to take the time to reflect on my spirit of teaching and those spirits of teaching past that are shaping my emerging identity as a teacher in this setting.

This has been a tough process for me, however, and for several reasons. One is that I seem to be stuck in the concreteness of my present. I think about my teaching skills more than my teaching philosophy. I think about specific techniques or styles I want to emulate from teachers I have had in the past, rather than think about the qualities that made them effective teachers or the qualities that enhanced the teaching/learning experience.

A second reason that this process has been tough for me is also related to my concrete, novice thinking. The mission and pedagogical emphasis of Lewiston-Auburn College and the MOT program are very different from my professional education experiences. I am a new teacher, and at the same time, I am also shifting in my approach to and philosophy of teaching and learning. My basic understanding of how teaching works has been shaken and dragged right out from under me. My spirits of teaching past operated very differently than the type of teacher I want to be. How can I possibly be informed by these spirits? They seem to be haunting me more than inspiring me. Yet, there must be pieces that I have pulled from the past, spirits that are carrying me forward, that are shaping who I am as a teacher now.

With the help of my colleagues I was able to develop different ways of reflecting on my past experiences, by thinking about specific teachers or events and by moving beyond (or before) my professional education experiences. Here is what I have discovered. There is a spirit of rigor that I have adopted from several influential teachers, most notably my 4th grade teacher, Mrs. P., and an undergraduate physical therapy professor, Dr. H. These women taught me that raising the bar and keeping the bar high is an important way to challenge students' thinking. But more important, by assisting students to meet these challenges, this spirit helps students feel confident in their learning and in themselves. I strive to carry forth this spirit of rigor and am aware of how important this is to my teaching now.

Dr. H. also instilled in me a spirit of theory that I revel in today. This spirit

may be concrete in some respects, but I value my knowledge base in theory and my ability to translate that theory into practice. This spirit of theory was definitely a gift from Dr. H., who lectured in exquisite detail about the theory behind the therapy techniques we were learning. Yet she also helped us to understand how important theory is to clinical practice. Theory is a big part of my teaching today, but I temper the spirit of theory with meaningfulness and enthusiasm that I learned from Dr. G.

This spirit of meaningfulness that I strive to embody was exemplified for me in Dr. G., an occupational therapy professor, who was able to help each student make that personal connection with the learning. He was able to connect complex biomechanical principles to every day life examples that we all had experienced. This meaningfulness, coupled with his pure enthusiasm for the subject matter, makes Dr. G.'s spirit stand out for me, and urges me to help my students make the same kind of meaningful connections.

As I reflect on how these spirits are shaping my emerging identity as a college teacher, I am reminded of a thought passed on to me by Dr. H.—that as a therapist I am a teacher. This therapist-as-teacher spirit is one that I need to reflect on more, but has clearly provided me with a sense of efficacy in my teacher role. As a therapist, I have taught in a wide variety of settings and have acquired skills and knowledge to teach in different ways. This spirit has been instrumental in keeping me here, keeping me sane, and has provided me with a strong base for continued development of own unique spirit of teaching.

So, despite the fact that I am in a new place, with a new philosophy, learning new strategies and techniques, I am able to reflect on my past experiences and discover many spirits that are inspiring me in the present and propelling me forward as my own unique spirit continues to emerge. And while I feel confident in the increased awareness I now bring to my own teaching-learning interactions, I am left with some persistent questions. Are the qualities I identified as being important or meaningful to my own spirit of teaching necessarily important or meaningful to my students? Are these qualities important for my own personal style of learning and teaching, or are they general qualities that others students will find meaningful as well? Will embracing the qualities I have identified as important and meaningful to me enhance my effectiveness as a teacher to all students? Clearly this process of reflection is just beginning.

Paul G. Caron

Upon reflecting on this topic I find myself fortunate to have had several teachers in my life who were positive inspirations and helped inspire me to be the educator that I am today. It is somewhat a disservice to these people for me to select only a few outstanding qualities from the many they manifested. However, there is one person who represents the best of these teachers.

My high school junior and senior teacher, Mr. R., was a magician and music lover, as well as a fine educator. The primary characteristic of Mr. R. was his belief that education transcends the acquisition of knowledge. Each student has a responsibility to be a self-cultivated, reflective, and intellectual thinker. This type of person will become a lifelong learner with a liberating spirit and a capacity for awe.

The methods and techniques this teacher used were manifestations of this belief. From the start he created a safe climate for learning. He was primarily concerned about the human needs of his students, believing that only when these are tended to can true learning take place. This environment was safe emotionally, socially, physically, and academically. His words, behaviors, and expressions assured us that we were approved and valued as people.

He took a personal interest in all of his students. For me, it was in music. He knew I had a talent for performing but not the confidence. He believed in me and the ability to move people through music. He fostered this talent by providing safe opportunities and nurturing it through encouragement. The result was that for the first time in my life I learned something about myself, my thoughts, and feelings, and expressed them through my playing. This in turn made me a different and avid learner with a new appreciation of the world and of others. Someone believed that I had something important to offer. Because of this experience, the final two years of high school were very rewarding.

Unfortunately my experience in college was not as fulfilling, due to the nature of the teaching I experienced. I was a non-entity. The primary focus of faculty attention was on content rather than the learner. The result was that I became a product of the institution with technical and supposedly marketable skills. What I did not become was a cultivated and spiritual person.

Soon after graduating from college, I entered teaching in a backward manner with no experience or training. I was an out-of-work musician one week who found himself in front of a class of high school seniors the next. I taught the way I had been taught in college. I instructed and imparted knowledge, and if some of the students grasped the concepts, then that was fine. At least I had done my job. As you can expect the results were not very positive. I was not a teacher, but an ineffectual instructor.

One day I met Mr. R. and we discussed my career. He did not give many words of advice but by speaking to him, I, for the first time, began to reflect on the ideology of my teaching. I was more concerned about teaching physics than teaching students. I viewed them as empty vessels waiting for me to fill them with knowledge. Upon further reflection I looked at the effectiveness of my high school English teacher. I never before internalized the true qualities of this person and his effective teaching ideology. It was fortunate that I had a role model. Even years later he knew I had an inner talent and guided me in finding it. Without him I would have left the field of education, though at the time it would not have been a great loss to the profession. What I took from this English teacher was his ability to believe in each of his students and to respect them. This was the most important element of teaching. I had to develop my belief in the significance of the human condition before I could call myself a teacher.

My methods, techniques, and beliefs about students slowly changed. My focus was on their hearts—for once I had their hearts, I had their heads. I became more successful and believed for the first time I had the beginnings of understanding the true essence of the spirit of teaching.

Now I work in teacher education. In teacher education the stress is mainly on developing an educator who is knowledgeable, competent, and capable of maintaining order in the classroom. However, my main focus is on creating a respect for humanity in each of my students. They in turn will hopefully carry this torch to their students.

The underlying spirit of teaching found in teachers such as Mr. R. is that they

view teaching as a spiritual art. The art of understanding, appreciating, and manifesting the liberating and relevant essential truths of human life. The art of leading and facilitating the process of discovering the essential ideas and meanings in all areas of study, in all content courses, and in all aspects of life. These educators enable the student to acquire knowledge and construct personal meaning that lead to social responsibility and internal freedom. The result? Students become skilled participants in society, achieving practical goals, and a cultivated person who treasures beauty, truth, and life. In short a cultivated, reflective, and intellectual thinker.

Concluding Reflections

Within our small sample, some common themes emerge in our reflections. Teachers such as those we have recalled know that learning is not entirely based on intellectual gifts nor on specific content areas, but also on attitude and how the student, as a person, relates to the course material and learning process. These teachers are willing to take chances in the classroom. They develop in their students a love of learning by not being afraid to show they love learning. They demonstrate a belief in their students and in the process of learning. The learning that occurs involves students in constructing their own knowledge and, in turn, their own belief in the learning process, thus making it more personal, meaningful, and self-reflective.

We also have seen some differences, or at least different questions, emerge in the content of our reflections. We are not uniform, for instance, in the degree to which we confidently equate what resonated powerfully from our experiences as learners with what will be most effective in our own teaching. We varied in the emphasis and articulation of specific desirable outcomes of teaching-learning, and also in the prominence given to the degree to which "safety" or "challenge" characterized the learning environment and spirit we recalled. These areas of difference may represent important areas for continued reflection and dialogue—for us individually and as a community of teachers-learners.

Our intent has been not so much on finding consensus in our individual recollections as on making the case for the utility of this type of reflection, the explication of the spirit[s] of teaching from one's earlier educational experiences. We challenge all teachers to think about the influential teachers in their lives. What was the essence of their being that influenced and guided you to become the teachers you are today? We ask each of you, after critically reflecting on these qualities, to consider how you also reveal this spirit of teaching to your students. While our reflections here remain in the realm of anecdotal evidence, "the spirit of teaching" that we find does indeed transcend specific individuals and suggests that when teachers are willing to reveal such spirit to their students, the results are increased motivation, aspirations, and a desire to sustain engagement with that spirit in the teaching-learning process.

Paul G. Caron is an assistant professor at the Univeristy of Southern Maine Lewiston-Auburn College. He currently works in the Teachers (for) Elementary and Middle School (TEAMS) Program, focusing on mathematics and science. He has served as assistant professor of secondary education at St. Joseph's College of Maine and the professional director of Maine's Curriculum Framework in Mathematics and Science. Caron is very proud of his thirteen years as a classroom teacher.

Jan L. Hitchcock, associate professor of social and behavioral sciences at USM's Lewiston-Auburn College, teaches courses on human development across the life span and on interdisciplinary topics such as cross-cultural psychology, violence, risk, and spirituality. Hitchcock's research interests include risk perception and the interrelationships of poetry and psychology.

Mary Anne O. Moisan is assistant professor of occupational therapy in the master's in occupational therapy program at USM's Lewiston-Auburn College. Prior to her initial appointment in the fall of 1997, Professor Moisan was employed as an occupational therapist at the Spurwink School in Auburn, Maine.

W. Bumper White coordinates and teaches in the Teachers (for) Elementary and Middle Schools (TEAMS) program at Lewiston-Auburn College, working with the Auburn and Lewiston school districts. This professional development school program is a collaborative college-school partnership model committed to the concept of the simultaneous renewal of both the local school districts and undergraduate pre-service teacher education. He has also been an elementary classroom teacher and building principal.

Theory and the Spirit of Teaching

Students at the Tube: Popular Culture as Inspiration

Christine G. Berg

8

This essay focuses on the ways that representations of popular culture, such as television programming, music lyrics, and advertisements, can inspire students and teachers alike in writing courses. Once labeled non-academic subject matter, pop culture offers fertile territory for student exploration, particularly in writing.

Years ago when I was a teaching fellow at Lehigh University assigned to instruct first-year students in introductory composition courses, I struggled to find material that would not only encourage students to think critically and to write effectively, but interest and excite them—and me—as well. I tried several different textbooks, each of which presented challenging topics and thoughtful advice about writing for students. Yet, while I enjoyed teaching with these texts, I sometimes had the feeling that students could be more enthusiastic than they were about the specific subject matter for the course. Eventually, I came across a text titled *Reading Culture: Contexts for Critical Reading and Writing* (George and Trimbur, 1999). The collage of images on the cover, including, among others, Levi's jeans, McDonald's golden arches, the Statue of Liberty, and young African American men with designs shaved in their hair, grabbed my attention. The title, too, intrigued me. At first glance, at least, the topic seemed very familiar to me. I opened the book to examine its Table of Contents, however, and immediately shook my head: oh no, not rapper Ice-T, not Beavis and Butthead, not the Budweiser ants (frogs and lizards came later). How could I let such figures into my college classroom willingly? More importantly, how could I get away with letting these cultural icons figure so prominently in the curriculum, in my course syllabus? I glanced again at the unit headings: "Chapter One: Music," "Chapter Four: Images," "Chapter Six: Television Culture." I wondered whether I could make Ice-T "study-able," and I imagined that my students would joke about the Budweiser ants and then suspiciously ask, squinting their eyes and knitting their eyebrows together in puzzlement, "No, seriously, what are we studying this semester?"

We were studying three things: techniques for writing college level papers, critical thinking, and turning thought into written analysis. I was attempting to

teach a group of students more about the best ways to communicate solid ideas in writing. I wanted to re-familiarize them with various methods of organizing their ideas, of providing transitions between paragraphs, of recognizing thoughts that stray from the focus of their writing, and of first identifying and then fixing typical grammatical errors. Given these goals, how exactly would Ice-T or Bruce Springsteen, Calvin Klein or Budweiser ants, Jerry Seinfeld or Oprah Winfrey, come into play? During those first semesters when I taught with texts that use popular culture—television programming, song lyrics, advertisements—as subject material, I learned how popular culture can help me reach those goals with students in ways that I had not before. Moreover, as I considered the idea of teaching composition using topics in popular culture, I came to the realization that challenging students to examine critically the very "stuff" of their lives by which, in many cases, they are influenced—but also likely to disregard as matter for serious thought—is important, interesting, compelling, and perhaps even inspirational.

Based on my experience using television shows, music lyrics, and advertisements in print, in addition to commercials, comic strips, tabloid articles, relevant art and photography shows, music videos, Dave Barry columns, and movie reviews in my college writing classes, I consider the wealth of representations that constitute popular culture to be material that inspires students to think and to write critically for four main reasons. First, pop culture provides a welcome common ground between students and teacher(s). In effect, pop culture is an equalizer. As it affects and appeals to students regardless of their individual backgrounds, it overcomes differences in gender, ethnicity, economic class, degree of education, and age. I usually ask students to analyze television programming as we begin the semester, and they invariably find some similarities in their viewing habits—a similar like for a program such as *ER*, a similar distaste for a certain talk show. When several students discover, for example, that they watch *ER*, they have an already-established common ground upon which they can build academic (and social) relationships. The similarity reduces initial tension among student-strangers in the classroom environment and creates a degree of comfort between classmates. Perhaps more important, however, in light of my goal for them to practice better writing, students tend to be familiar with much of television programming so that when they review each other's written drafts of papers, they can be better readers and offer better responses to their peers. When a student analyzes an episode of *ER*, for instance, he or she is likely to have readers who are familiar with the show, if not the specific episode, and who are, thus, more capable of responding to peer review questions with some insight. Moreover, when students consider their classmates as a potential audience for their papers, they are more likely to work toward impressing that audience because they know their readers are knowledgeable in the subject. Such common ground prompts students to translate their awareness of their peers' familiarity with certain television shows, music groups, and/or advertising campaigns into better writing that reveals their commitment to their work.

A second way that I see popular culture inspiring students lies in the connection the material often encourages between students and teacher that might not otherwise occur. Just as I am genuinely interested in what they watch on television, what music they like, and what products they buy (and why), so students are eager to discover more about the person whose private life and tastes are usually

most elusive: the professor. I tell them that I do not watch many television shows because the plots are too formulaic and the actors/actresses are unconvincing (save *Homicide*, a recently cancelled show I deeply miss). I tell them that Madonna is more of an entertainer than a songwriter in my mind; for thought-provoking lyrics (and potential paper topics), turn to Bob Dylan. I tell them about advertisements for children's toys that seem particularly effective to me, perhaps because I am the target audience, a new mother. Although I have taken some risks in revealing these things about myself (students can begin to consider the teacher a friend, and a "C" grade from a "friend" can read like a betrayal), ultimately, I have found the experience to be liberating. Students are naturally curious about the lives their professors lead and, for the most part, respectful of their personal opinions. Furthermore, divulging the facts of my TV viewing habits, musical taste, and spending habits somehow makes me a more honest teacher in their eyes; and my openness encourages students to be more reflective—and honest, themselves—in their assessment of how popular culture influences them and others. In addition, my willingness to reveal my own analysis of popular culture (what movies I've seen, what plays I would recommend, what television shows I dislike) not only functions as a model for students to follow as they produce their own analyses, but, in a strange way, makes students more receptive to the real matter at hand: my suggestions about ways to engage in the readings, to practice critical thinking, and to write more effectively. Once students in my classes at Lehigh discovered that I, too, watched *Seinfeld*, for example, they became more willing to hear my thoughts on comma splices (the two are not mutually exclusive). And once students in my most recent college writing courses at the University of Southern Maine understood that, like them, I was confounded by the popularity of certain talk shows, they became more willing to follow my guidelines about strong transition sentences between paragraphs. In effect, I speak their language, and then they speak mine.

While this connection between students and teacher is a rewarding result of using popular culture as subject matter in my writing courses, an even more important consideration (my third point) is the way pop culture can inspire students to write, since they are working with what is familiar to them. Though most students have not written an analysis of a TV show, an advertisement, or a song before, they have spent quite a bit of time in front of the television; they have paged through, sat through, or listened to countless advertisements; and they have learned something about what music appeals to them. Not only is this familiar territory, then, but society's responses to, and often criticism of, certain expressions of pop culture have not escaped them. They are aware of the controversies over rap music lyrics and videos, over children's television programming, over the prevalence of violence in the media, and over ad campaigns like Calvin Klein's that test boundaries. They have, in fact, been absorbing this information for most of their lives. Given that familiar territory, many students are then able to exercise more fully their ability to think critically. The challenge is that I am asking them to "read" the "texts" of pop culture (TV shows, ads, song lyrics) more closely than they ever have before, and I provide models as well as strategies for accomplishing this new and challenging task. But more often than not, students have already laid the groundwork for performing this kind of critical thinking in that the subject matter is not new to them. Because they have seen numerous advertisements in

print for various women's perfumes, for example, they already have a basic knowledge upon which to build, and they often surprise themselves with the amount of analysis they can produce. It is as if all of the time they have spent glancing at advertisements in magazines serves as quality research for the written assignments for this course. They come to know what to expect of an ad for women's perfume, and based upon that expectation, they can better analyze the crucial operating aspects of the ad, such as layout, the text, the size and placement of any images, the use of color, and the assumptions it makes about consumers. (By comparison, in a different course, I might be dealing with the student who has read the short story several times before coming to class.) The extent of their research, whether performed consciously or not, helps to prepare students for the written analysis required of them for the course. Moreover, the familiarity with the subject matter encourages confidence in writing and, more often than not, generates student interest. They write better because they are interested in what they are studying and because they are learning something about themselves as viewers/consumers as well as about Americans in general.

Finally, using popular culture as subject matter for my writing courses interests and inspires me as a teacher, particularly as current events shape my research and preparation for class. I routinely spend Sunday reading not only the newspaper, but the advertisements, comics, and coupon sections included therein. I am regularly thrilled to find a film review that exposes Hollywood's biases, a Dave Barry column that laments the lack of engaging programming on television, a "Cathy" comic strip that criticizes American standards of beauty for women as perpetuated by popular magazines, or an advertisement that purposefully calls attention to the subliminal messages advertisers use to entice consumers. By bringing these pieces into the classroom, I hope to model for students how engaging the study of pop culture can be. Ultimately, the more students are inspired to write, to read, to think critically, and to contribute to class discussions, the more I am inspired to facilitate such learning.

Overall, my experience teaching composition courses with texts that focus on the study of popular culture has taught me how well this material suits the goals and purposes of a writing course. Because of the way the topics in popular culture provide a common ground for students, I have seen student writing improve. Because of the different dynamics of the student-teacher relationship, I have been able to encourage students to take grammar, organization, focus, and other writing concerns seriously. And because of students' familiarity with television programming, advertisements, and music in general, I have enjoyed reading student analyses of popular culture that reflect their ability to think critically as well as their own enjoyment of the arguments they are pursuing in writing. Using topics in popular culture, I have been inspired to teach well, and inspired teaching is the best way to ensure inspired learning. Years later, I still use *Reading Culture* as the primary text of my writing classes, and I still begin the semester with a doubt or two about allowing either Beavis or Butthead into the classroom. But now, having experienced the excitement that pop culture can generate in student discussions and in student writing, I simply smile when I hear them ask, "No, seriously, what are we studying this semester?"

Christine G. Berg holds a doctorate from Lehigh University. She enjoys teaching literature courses, incorporating the writings of a multicultural selection of authors, as well as composition courses in which she asks students to analyze aspects of popular culture. Christine is currently teaching journalism at Allentown College in Pennsylvania.

References

Colombo, G., R. Cullen, and B. Lisle. Eds. (1992). *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press.

Ford, M. and J. Ford. Eds. (1999). *Mass Culture and Electronic Media*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

George, D. and J. Trimbur. Eds. (1999). *Rereading Culture: Contexts for Critical Reading and Writing*. New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, Inc.

Maasik, S. and J. Solomon. Eds. (2000). *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press.

Mims, J. T. and E. M. Nollen. Eds. (2000). *Mirror on America: Short Essays and Images from Popular Culture*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press.

Murray, P. Y. and S. F. Covell. Eds. (1998). *Living in America: A Popular Culture Reader*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Verburg, C. J. Ed. (2000). *Ourselves among Others: Readings from Home and Abroad*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press.

Affective Literacy: The Education of Interpersonal Mindfulness

Bette Katsekas

9

A broader range of cognition that includes affective literacy and interpersonal mindfulness is necessary in this technological and information-based age. Interpersonal mindfulness and skills of affective literacy are essential components of multicultural education and provide a balance of learning that includes not only content (what we learn) but how we utilize skills and information in relationship. The process of education needs to include the education of relationships in order to be more ethical, kind, and respectful toward one another in the context of a more loving and compassionate educational system.

Our technological and information-based revolutions and systems continue to expand and demand excellence in teaching and learning. Cognitive development and learning based on the skills of logic, linguistics, mathematics, and the ability to memorize and synthesize data, remain vital components of the educational process. Yet a broader range of cognition requires a deeper examination and consideration within the context of our current levels of informational evolution and growth to include kinesthetic and spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal, musical, creative and artistic, and the spiritual nature-based components. These areas are important in addition to the logical, mathematical, and linguistic realms in education; many schools expand curriculum to include more of these components (Goleman, 1995).

A more inclusive view of intelligence may help us determine and define a more balanced range of educational tasks and successes. One aspect of Gardner's model of multiple intelligences deals specifically with emotional or affective literacy, or the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions of intelligence. Also known as the more encompassing area of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), levels of affective literacy are noted indicators of growth and development often associated with achievement and efficacy in many life areas.

Major components of emotional literacy (empathy, interpersonal and intrapersonal awareness, mutual respect, positive regard, and societal altruism) are constructs reminiscent of Rogers' contributions to education and to the practice of counseling (Rogers, 1961). Interpersonal ethics were considered by Greek philosophers as major cornerstones of the more civilized way of life. In today's world of rapid change, affective literacy is essential for the kind of inter-cultural cooperation that often accompanies global economic development.

Affective literacy enhances the development of relational ethics. Sound interpersonal ethics (or, the more broadly considered term, "interpersonal mindfulness") are as crucial as knowledge and information in order to elicit increasing levels of effective social change. Interpersonal mindfulness, a sense of ethics, and skills of affective literacy are the practical cornerstones and interpersonal components for multicultural education. The reverse also seems true—the development of prejudice, interpersonal intolerances, provincialisms and regionalisms negatively impact the development of emotional intelligence and constructive interpersonal and cultural appreciation.

There are few more critical arenas in life than the classroom. This is where most of us as learners have achieved an understanding of interpersonal and relational ethics, either intentionally by design, or through watching and observing others. The need for technological and complex literacy is high and is expanding rapidly. It is a top priority in most learning curricula and political agendas. The value of technological knowledge often goes unquestioned in our educational, business, and political environments. This is not a negative trend in and of itself, since technological growth with its required competencies of computer skills is necessary for our evolution and survival, as well as for our quality education. Yet learning should also include the essential components of affective literacy in the educational process itself. It is not so much the "what," or context of learning or cognition, but the "how" of its context that needs to be addressed in our classrooms. Making contact with and developing all levels of cognition, especially the components of affective literacy, need to become an essential part of *how* we learn. Interpersonal mindfulness involves a sense of learning in relation; that is, the content of what we learn cannot be separated from how we use it and its obvious importance of the context of human relations in a compassionate and mindful world.

Interpersonal Mindfulness in the Academy

The importance of affective literacy is most evident in higher education, especially in that much of what we do or accomplish is essentially in relation with one another. What happens in this space of academic exchange that we experience every day, all day for the most part, even while sitting at a computer, often involves some interpersonal exchange. How does a learning climate affect the overall balance of intellectual/cognitive development in balanced learning essential for a quality higher education? We who teach and work in academic realms may sense some reactions to these and the related kinds of questions. In other words, we have a good idea of what we face at this crossroads of interpersonal and societal development: an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive and balanced form of learning that more specifically involves our interpersonal ethical development, a conscious reflection of ourselves as a whole species, and one another as members of it.

The prioritization and application of new discoveries (for example in science or medicine), often demand an ethical decision making ability that is balanced;

based as much on, say, interpersonal, as on linguistic factors, relational as well as logical ones. Members of our educational community are often sought out for direction, and many educators look to one another, and to a sense of collective wisdom for some answers. Perhaps we have not allowed ourselves enough process time to *recognize*, *reflect*, and *discuss* more of those important issues in higher education.

The Education of Kindness: Empathy, Respect, Compassion, and Authenticity

Existential philosophers and humanistic educators historically have emphasized the importance of the core conditions of empathy, genuineness, respect, and positive regard in the process of education (Rogers, 1961; Plato, 1956). In a typical graduate level counselor education program, for example, such core values, or conditions, have formed the philosophical framework for the effective practice of counseling and psychotherapy during the past half-century. Outside of and including counselor education, the whole process of education is a therapeutic and transformative one in peoples' lives. A revisitation to this philosophical construct (of the realm of the in-between), that relational place of significance mentioned by existential philosophers and educators, may assist us in this balanced kind of learning. Growth in relationships, and the comprehension of and commitment to relational sanctity involves more work than our efforts have yielded during the latter part of this century, for example, in respect to multicultural awareness. Diversity awareness, prejudice reduction, and the development of related goals have helped us *partly* to meet the challenge of movement from monoculturalism to multiculturalism, and we have made some significant gains in improving cognition, learning, and technology.

Yet authenticity, empathy, respect, and compassion need more recognition, more expansive levels of definition, historical study, expression, and prioritization for a whole and healthy society to develop. This is essential not only for a more balanced kind of intelligence and learning, but also to help us move toward mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness and to maximize the potential of each and every individual in society regardless of their difference. Each classroom then is a snapshot, a microcosm, of our current level of emotional evolution and of our progression within a changing world situation.

Students and teachers often reflect the cultural and political realities of any particular point in time. The classroom (as is the whole domain of education) is the fundamental land of the in-between. Education does not occur by electronic transmission or by telling, watching, and hearing as much as it does in a *context of relational dynamics*. Most individuals, when recollecting the landmark educational experiences of their lives, often recall their passion for the subject matter, but also very likely recall the interpersonal passion in the academic realm of excitement *with another*, be it with teachers or other students. The realm of the in-between in the educational arena is a cognitive, behavioral, and affective one. Conditions such as empathy, genuineness, respect, and positive regard identify the interpersonal domain of effective *learning in relation* (Gilligan, 1982).

This is particularly meaningful when we examine this realm, this domain of relationalism, within our university and this is perhaps where major re-balancing and realignments of intelligence should occur. *Relationalism cannot replace rationalism. But relationalism, at the very least, should complement rationalism.* The contextual change necessary is a dynamic one. The first step in our process must be a close and honest examination of our interpersonal exchanges: faculty/student; faculty/administrator; administrator/student; and other role exchanges. We must speak to the person as well as the role. In other words, logic, attention to detail and cognition are inarguably valued and emphasized in all of these relationships. Teaching, and the modeling of interpersonal ethics in learning, needs to be valued as well. We exchange facts, yet we also exchange process in any given time frame.

Ethics Education with an Interpersonal Perspective

Relational ethics with an interpersonal perspective is an essential, if understated, part of the learning process and inquiry. Our educational system has a responsibility to teach, model, and utilize the basic principles of interpersonal decency along with the dissemination of data and information. Ethical decision-making within the context of total intelligence—logic, linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, artistic, creative, kinesthetic, spatial, and intuitive—is necessary especially as our educational system becomes more driven by the lightening speed of information systems, advanced technology, and a need for laser-like linear thinking.

An educational belief system that values interpersonal spirituality exudes a deep respect for all living things. A major role of knowledge in the 21st century should be placed within a context of an evolving humanity. Students, faculty, staff, and administration within the educational system are more than receptacles for information storage, or control towers for an ever-expanding web of cyberspace. The role of educators and of an educational system needs to include the education of relationship. This is an additional guiding force needed for all knowledge from grade school to university.

Carl Rogers emphasized the value of a system of interpersonal ethics (Rogers, 1961). Prior to his death, Rogers envisioned an extension of his principles toward the development of interpersonal peace between the world's different cultures. Few of us can dispute the importance of such an idea. In essence, we have the potential to act and be more ethical, kind, and respectful toward one another in the context of a more loving and compassionate educational system. Scholarly work on the importance of relational well-being has been pursued in many different theories of individual and family counseling, and work emphasizing overall health and well-being in general (Chopra, 1989). Interpersonal mindfulness is important to consider within the educational exchange of knowledge.

A greater consciousness of what happens in each moment of learning lends more power to the process of learning and to our overall intellectual development. There is a dynamic and intensive drama that occurs within the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual provinces of being that can be found in realms of education. If whole health emphasizes the value of wellness and relational love, then perhaps whole intelligence or cognition should do likewise. We can begin with ourselves, in relation to one another, with the challenge of rediscovering the values of kindness and mutuality, especially within a context such as academia, that is often fraught with stress, linear thinking, and isolation. As we become more integrated, balanced, and whole, within a higher level of learning, a more solid and consistent pathway for interpersonal change can occur.

There are specific and concrete steps that could be infused with the constructs of mutual respect, interpersonal mindfulness, empathy, altruism, and positive re-

gard toward one another (Rogers, 1961). Listening skills, the core conditions of counseling, more peaceful thinking, in the presence of others, are all simple steps that could go a long way toward the improvement of personal health, stress reduction, and clear thinking.

Relational ethics education's centerpiece would be that no *amount* of education is useful without the mindfulness of how to treat others respectfully and to identify the components of respect, positive regard, and compassion in what one does. The education of interpersonal mindfulness requires a knowledge base of affective literacy. This kind of education would be about the valuing of others at all levels of education. Infinite knowledge in a narcissistic vacuum at best would lead toward a vision-less future, and at worst, self-annihilation. Central questions revolve not only around the issues of how much do our students (or faculty) know, but rather, how do they know it, how do they use it, *how do they use it with others*? It may come down to the fact that affective literacy integrated with the different kinds of learning deserve more integration and more of a role in our educational future. As academics, we need to be more courageous in speaking of compassion, and revive its ancient roots of discourse within our public and educational domains, even making it sacred and central to learning. Compassion and understanding are the glue that holds our panhuman and transpersonal ideals intact in this often materialistic world. There is more to education than an information base. There is more to it than individual students and teachers. There is an infinite world in what happens between us. Practices of kindness and mindful compassion need to be more than statements or policies made in education. They need to be central and integrated within academic practices. Promotion and development of a discourse of interpersonal mindfulness and love toward one another can lead to a more authentic version of enlightenment in our world of the 21st century. Relational skill and affective literacy are vital in ethical decisions especially as newer discoveries are made in technology, medicine, and their related applications in this information age. Kindness and mindful compassion are as vital for a healthy and positive future world, as is a more comprehensively intelligent and technologically literate population.

In public and private education, a discussion and development of the many levels of interpersonal respect, empathy, and compassion may result in greater levels of respect for community, society, and world culture through conscious connective learning. Education is expressed in its purest form through its contribution to culture as an act of love. At their most elemental states, teaching and learning are transformative and therapeutic events, individually and collectively. Interpersonal mindfulness's infusion into our curriculum can occupy a higher priority on the academic food chain and in subsequent lifelong learning programs. More consciously compassionate interactions would slowly remove the imbalances created by the overemphasis of logical and linguistic intelligences. The integration of the *total parts* of human intelligence would utilize more areas of a person's cognition so that respect, decency, and morality *in relation* are not separate forms of dogmatic learning but authentic ways of being in everyday life. This greater valuing of positive aspects of relationships would allow for interpersonal mindfulness and peace to have at least as high, if not higher, value in our public consciousness than do financial security, technological knowledge, competition, and regionalism.

Our hopes for a changing world based on more than idealistic rhetoric can effectively occur as does education in general—one person at a time, in steps, and in stages. A more balanced discourse, professional integrity, and character development are not achieved through telling, selling, programming or memorizing, but in being, modeling, and showing. Concrete steps toward interpersonal mindfulness in a new era characterized by mindful ways of living and learning are essential principles to live by from grade school to academe. We all wish for a life filled more with quality intimacy, authenticity, and genuine interactions between people. Deep down we may share a vision of not only who we are, but in a more sacred sense, who we could become.

Bette Katsekas is an assistant professor of counselor education with over 20 years of experience as a counselor and supervisor. She has an interest in ethical decision making, interpersonal mindfulness, and cultural factors of sexual orientation. She has presented at conferences and workshops on counseling ethics and has recently produced a video for the American Counseling Association available online on counseling ethics and is the author of a book on the *Ten Principles of Interpersonal Mindfulness*. Bette lives in Portland with her partner, Diane, two dogs, and newly adopted son Alex.

References

Allport, G. (1953). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Chopra, D. (1989). *Quantum Healing: Exploring the Frontiers of Mind/Body Medicine*. New York: Bantam Books.

Corey, G. (1996). *The Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. New York: Harper Collins.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Matters More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Difference Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ivey, A., I., M., and Simek-Morgan, L.(1997). *Counseling and Psychotherapy from a Multicultural Perspective*(4th ed). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Plato, *Thaetetus*, In I. Edmin, ed. (1956). *The Philosophy of Plato* translated by B. Jonett. New York: Random House.

Rogers, C. (1961). *On Becoming a Person*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin

The Spirit of Teaching: Theory, Practice, and Healing

Kathleen I. MacPherson

10

The author's spirit of teaching nursing and women's studies has encompassed theory, practice, and healing. Two examples—dying and menopause—illustrate how theory when practiced can be healing for the practitioner as well as the patient. Any theory will only work when put into practice. At the current time the University of Southern Maine is a safe place where healing theories are taught, applied, and must be continued. If universities are pressured into giving up this mission, there will be no place to heal.

Theory as Healing

I saw my first patient die at Massachusetts General Hospital, on the medical unit in the old Bullfinch building. As an 18-year-old nursing student, I watched the old Italian man surrounded by doctors, residents, and medical students silently "slip away." Biomedical theory, with its focus on pathophysiology, is what I had been taught, but it was of no help in understanding the mystery of death, nor the stoic response of doctors, nor my own inexpressible feeling of numbed pain. Nursing instructors, drawing from medical education, had taught me to remain objective and to keep "a stiff upper lip" while observing suffering and death.

This dilemma of how to deal with death haunted me throughout nurses' training and became acute as I worked as an R.N. It frustrated me and made me feel dishonest when nurses could not, in the 1950s and early 1960s, tell the patients who asked if they were dying the truth. It was a situation which caused dying patients who wanted to know the truth the excruciating pain of abandonment, so well portrayed in Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1900). I could not know, at the time, that I had been caught up in a sex-segregated profession with little autonomy or power. Later I learned that as a nurse I did not have control of my practice. Doctors' orders had to be obeyed even in such ethically torturous situations. Instead of healing, nurses and physicians created a practice that caused illness. The etiology for this invisible and silent illness was a theoretical absence, having no way to address their patients' and their own sorrow.

I began to deal with this dilemma by asking, "How can I shape an ethical,

humanistic practice with dying patients?" Many books gave me new insights, but none were as useful as those written by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, a Swiss-born psychiatrist and counselor on death. Her focus in *Living with Death and Dying* was exactly what I was looking for: a theory based on clinical research with dying patients (1981). Research findings showed that the majority of patients preferred their primary physician or nurse to be honest with them at the beginning of a serious illness. In an earlier book, *On Death and Dying*, Kubler-Ross looked for common patterns among dying patients and theorized that most, but not all, dying patients go through five stages of dying—from the first stage of denial to the final stage of acceptance or feelings of defeat, and bitterness (1969). The five stages do not always occur in lockstep order; sometimes there is a skipping ahead, backtracking, or simply omission.

It is important to specify what and how a theory can heal; Kubler-Ross's research provides an example. Patients who have a terminal illness feel anxiety and fear from the moment they receive the diagnosis. Healing is facilitated when the various stages of dying are understood and supported by caretakers, followed by open discussions on the probability of dying and death, if this is desired by the patient. The process starts early and proceeds at the patient's pace. Early timing stands in strong contrast with the more common practice of discussing death only when it is near, if at all. Kubler-Ross's research theorizes that the optimal outcome for the dying patient, in our culture, is to come as close as possible to acceptance of death. If this is not possible, the caretaker (usually the nurse) has theoretical guidance for understanding the patient's feelings and behavior. The patient who is still angry or depressed, if not understood, can be isolated physically and emotionally from caretakers and family, reports Kubler-Ross.

Nurses like myself, who became frustrated and angry because of forced silence, can be healed. For me, the theory validated my belief that nurses should have the right to an ethical and humane practice with terminally ill patients. This includes open communication and caring until the end. Nurses quickly embraced Kubler Ross's work and used it in their practice. It is not clear to me what impact the theory has had on the tendency of physicians to paint a more cheerful picture of the patient's condition than is justified, and to remain silent on the subject of death.

Perhaps Kubler-Ross, her research, and her theory on death and dying are fated to stay on the margin of medical practice. This is more likely now since managed care imperatives stress profits over labor intensive efforts to comfort patients. Lack of time for nurses to use this theory in their practice may once again cause pain for the patients and themselves, based on the universal fear of death when it is not openly discussed. Like any theory, it will only work when put into practice.

As time passed I became a faculty member at the University of Southern Maine. In that role my practice was less clinical, in a hands-on sense, and more theoretical. For the last twenty years, my practice, in large part, consisted of disseminating knowledge through teaching, researching, and writing on older women's health with a special focus on menopause.

Practice as Knowledge Transfer

Like dying, menopause was a stigmatized subject that, until recently, people only whispered about. It, too, was an experience for which few women had access

to theory and therefore to understanding. Research on menopause was almost exclusively based on biomedical theory. To the best of my knowledge, my article entitled "Menopause as Disease: The Social Construction of a Metaphor" was the first in nursing literature to use various theories to critique biomedical model hegemony (MacPherson, 1981). Since the 1960s, many physicians, believing that menopause is a disease, prescribed estrogen as a necessary treatment. In my article I had drawn from the work of Irving Zola who had contributed heavily to the theory of medicalization. Zola (1972) examined the ways in which physicians have extended their power through their role as gatekeepers "by medicalizing much of daily living, by making medicine and the labels of 'healthy' and 'ill' relevant to an ever increasing part of human existence" (p. 487). Medicalization theory is particularly powerful for increasing women's understanding of how their natural reproductive functions—menses, pregnancy, birthing, and menopause—are presented as potential causes of illness. I believe that re-framing menopause as a natural transition in women's lives opens opportunities for them to explore perspectives on menopause other than medical. Medicalization theory opened the door to historians, psychologists, spiritual women, feminists, and many more to replace the deficiency disease myth with positive views (MacPherson, 1995). This shift has enhanced healing, for instead of dreading "the change," women who learn the benefits and lose fear of madness or loss of their sexuality, can usually accept this phase of life.

The Future

Now the university is a safe place where healing theories are taught and applied. These theories provide, as in my experience, systematic explanations that point to action. They heal and give people a hope to control their lives better. I find it hard to believe that the millennium will bring us a world that does not need theories. Universities must continue to acknowledge their role of recognizing personal and societal pain leading to illness. If universities are pressured into giving up this mission, it will lead back to sickness and there will be no place to heal.

Like the group at Massachusetts General Hospital watching death arrive in silence, our students and ourselves will experience a theoretical absence, with no way to address sorrows, like death, the millennium will surely bring.

Kathleen I. MacPherson, professor emerita of nursing, has taught at the University of Southern Maine since 1974. Her theoretical publications in *Advances in Nursing Science* and *Feminist Studies* address women's health issues, research methodology, and health policy. In 1980 she was one of the founders of the women's studies program at USM. Professor MacPherson was named the recipient of the Walter E. Russell Chair in Philosophy and Education in 1996.

References

Kubler-Ross, E. (1972). *On Death and Dying*. New York: Macmillan.

Kubler-Ross, E. (1981). *Living with Death and Dying*. New York: Macmillan.

MacPherson, K., I. (1981). Menopause as Disease: The Social Construction of a Metaphor. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 3 (2), 95-113.

MacPherson, K. I. (1995). Going to the Source: Women Reclaim Menopause. *Feminist Studies*, 21 (2), 347-357.

Tolstoy, L. (1900). *The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories*. New York: Scribner.

Zola, I. K. (1972) Medicine as an Institution of Social Control., *Sociology Review 20*, 487-504.

Teaching as Generativity vs. Stagnation

Valerie Hart

11

Eric Erickson's seventh stage of psychosocial development is explored as it relates to the experience of teaching. The concept of sharing knowledge and wisdom with those who follow us, as professionals and citizens, is discussed. Teaching can provide a forum for expressing a generative as opposed to a stagnated spirit. If we do not allow external differences of a younger generation to alienate us, teaching can be the mode of creating advancement of the human experience.

Erik Erickson (1902-1994) was born near Frankfort, Germany, out of wedlock to a Danish mother. He was never to know his biological father's identity and grew up with his mother and stepfather, who adopted Erik when he was three years old. He preferred art and languages rather than the sciences and as a young man traveled around Europe before attending college and keeping a diary of his experiences. He attended art school and taught art to children of Americans who were in Vienna, some for analytic training with Freud. Erickson himself trained for a time at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute before he moved to America in 1933. As the first child analyst in Boston he also taught at the Harvard Medical School. Although most well-known for his model of human development, published in *Childhood and Society* (1950), he also was interested in combat crisis during WWII, child-rearing practices among the Sioux in South Dakota, troubled adolescents (*Youth: Change and Challenge*, 1963; *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 1968), racial issues, changing sexual roles, nuclear war, and finally the topic of aging when he and his wife were both robust octogenarians (*Vital Involvement in Old Age*, 1994).

Although the focus of this paper is the seventh of the eight stages of development in Erickson's model, a review of the six stages that precede generativity vs. stagnation is important because Erickson believed that successful negotiation of any stage is dependent on having mastered those preceding it.

Stage 1- Trust vs. Mistrust (approximately birth to 1 year) This first developmental stage involves the development of "trust" in the sense of being cared for and predictability of that care as opposed to developing a suspicious and insecure sense of self. It is considered the foundational stage that relates to all subsequent

relationships and a person's view of the world as either a safe and trustworthy place or one that is to be dealt with cautiously throughout life.

Stage 2- Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt (approximately ages 2-3) - This is the stage in which the primary issue is that of self-control without loss of self-esteem. The most common example usually given is that of the process of toilet training for the toddler where the issues play out so clearly in terms of control. It is believed by various psychosocial theorists that situations later in life involving one's sense of self or identity in relation to control and the opposite, or feeling out-of-control, can be traced to this important stage of development.

Stage 3 - Initiative vs. Guilt (ages 4 and 5) - During this stage a child explores the world and faces the issue of responsibility and potential accomplishments. Having established at least a rudimentary sense of self the child then tries out new behavior and experiences with a sense of curiosity and enthusiasm. The results of this inquiry may determine how the child views risk taking later in life as well as the ability to deal with failure.

Stage 4 - Industry vs. Inferiority (age 6 years to puberty) - Entry into the larger world of school greatly expands the life of the child. Today this means exposure to the extraordinary realities of technology and the Internet as well. Positive experiences lead to a feeling of mastery and competence as opposed to a sense of inadequacy and failure. This is again a time of taking risks and attempting new behaviors. The all-important messages that children receive from teachers and parents may determine how risk taking is perceived as an adult.

Stage 5 - Identity vs. Confusion (adolescence) - The chaotic time when a sense of self, otherwise known as "identity" is reorganized. Values are tested, authority is challenged, and new behavior is explored all in the service of forming an identity, which one will carry into adulthood. While this can be a vexing time for the parents of adolescents, the process of questioning authority and society's values is essential for creating the makings of an autonomous adult.

Stage 6 - Intimacy vs. Isolation (young adulthood) - Encompasses the task of forming and maintaining intimate relationships. The requirement of successfully having negotiated a former stage is quite evident when considering this task. A cloudy sense of self will make true intimacy an impossible task.

Finally we have arrived at the main theme of this paper, that of *Stage 7 - Generatively vs. Stagnation* - before reaching the final stage, *Integrity vs. Despair.*

According to Erickson, in the seventh stage the individual is in mid- to late-adulthood and has supposedly bonded with another and perhaps borne and raised some children. Erickson was unique among developmental theorists of his era in postulating that not only are children dependent on adults, but we adults are also dependent on children because of the human need to be needed. After the former stage of focusing on one intimate other and family matters, the individual may then turn outward to society and find a need to contribute in some meaningful way. I find many of my middle age patients are themselves longing for a sense of meaning in their lives and may desire to volunteer or assist others in society in some manner, often for the first time in their lives. The bearing and raising of one's own children are not the only way to navigate this stage. It involves being productive, creative, and guiding future generations.

We who are involved in teaching are blessed to be able to pass along our accumulated wisdom to future generations in every class we teach. We share facts

interspersed with personal vignettes that we have learned along the path of life. The actual teaching of skills is particularly rewarding (akin to the traditional model of learning through apprenticeship). For it is not only the actual skill that is taught, but also the philosophy of the work and lessons learned from years of experience that are of value to the novice. Some of our students will choose us to be mentors because of a special connection. Our openness to this opportunity will enable us to accomplish Erikson's seventh stage of human development.

In my teaching I am able to teach not only *techniques* of advanced psychiatric nursing, such as assessment and psychotherapy, but also to instill in my students a certain perspective regarding patient care in general. The ability to affect the psychiatric care of patients in Maine and perhaps beyond is a heady reality. In my own private psychotherapy practice I have a chance to treat a small number of clients. However, compounding the clients that my current and past students treat often gives me the impression that I have made a larger contribution in this area. The willingness of a teacher to share their ideas and knowledge with students is the hallmark of behaving in a "generative" fashion.

Of course we should consider the opposite of the ideal, and in this stage that is the notion of "stagnation." This is what we, as teachers, are attempting to ward off by the very nature of our daily work with students. In stagnation the individual languishes in unfulfilled obligations, unrealized promises, and unfinished tasks. Commitments to fellow human beings are not made and perhaps even close contact is severed or never made. In stagnation one is concerned only with one's own comfort and pleasure and finds no value in guiding the next generation. Life may be "adequate" but certainly not fulfilling and will perhaps be burdened by boredom. This is not a very appealing prospect.

The ego strength involved in being productive and possessing the ability to care, by way of creative work toward humanity, is the consequence of experiencing generatively. Instead of hoarding bits of wisdom we are encouraged to share and freely offer them so that the next generation will be equipped to make better choices with additional knowledge. In this way we add to the collective wisdom of our species. The differences between generations—whether expressed in taste of music, style of dress, or personal values—may pose as obstacles to our connecting in genuine and non-critical ways to members of the younger generation(s). But by teaching those who follow us we become a part of the development and evolution of society. Our ideas may live on in ways we cannot even imagine. We may provide rich experiences for our students that become the foundation for greater and deeper learning and living. In doing so, we may share in the knowledge that we have made a significant contribution to humanity. As lofty as it might sound, this is the goal of generativity.

The seventh stage is the precursor to the final stage, that of "Ego Integrity Vs. Despair." In the final chapter of life one either finds a calmness, a sense of satisfaction, when looking back on the decisions made in life, or experiences the absence of purpose of a life devoid of meaning. The latter may manifest itself as a fear of death, knowing there is no time left to live our life in a different way. This unhappy scenario is sometimes evident when interacting with elders. Some elders may be quite peaceful and joyful while others dwell in bitterness and negativity regarding their life in general.

In his final years, Erickson, in collaboration with his wife and another col-

league, wrote *Vital Involvement in Old Age* (1994). In this book the authors describe how the end of life may be filled with productive activity, purpose, and joy —not images of late age prevalent in our society. In many ways this book is a capstone product and reflection of Eric Erikson's own generativity. He kept on learning and teaching right to the end.

If we are generous with our students, freely sharing what we know and encouraging them to use this knowledge to further their understanding of whatever the subject matter is we teach, we are also engaging generative behavior. Our contribution will add collectively to the whole and may allow us to feel a sense that we have made a difference when, like the great teachers who have come before us, we enter the final chapter of life.

Valerie Hart, Ed.D., is an associate professor of nursing in the College of Nursing and Health Professions at the University of Southern Maine. In addition to teaching psychiatric mental health nursing at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, she has maintained her clinical practice as a nurse psychotherapist and is in private practice in Portland, Maine. She lives on Peaks Island with her children, John and Paige, and their lively Springer Spaniel, Griffin. She is squarely into Erickson's seventh stage and is aiming for generativity.

References

Coles, R. (Ed.) (2000). The *Erikson Reader*. London: W.W. Norton Co.

Erikson, E. (1950). *Childhood and Society*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Erikson, E. (1968). *Youth: Change and Challenge*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Erikson, E. (1982). *The Life Cycle Completed*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Erikson, E., Erikson, J., and Kivnick, H. (1994). *Vital Involvement in Old Age*. New York: W.W. Norton

Friedman, L. (1999). *Identity's Architect: A Biography of Erik H. Erikson*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rosen, P. (1997). *Erik H. Erikson: The Power and Limits of A Vision*. London: Jason Aronson.

The Spirit of Teaching as a Dialogue of Learning, Living, and Loving

Wesley Joseph Mills

12

Teaching is primarily an art rather than a science. It is an art that integrates knowledge and know-how in communicating and sharing with others. While it is understood that training, technique, and skill contribute to teaching effectiveness, teaching is largely intuitive and, as such, constitutes a dialogue between teacher and learner. This dialogue is based upon an imaginative connection between a learning context and content. The goal of teaching and learning is transformation, not merely information. As teachers and learners move from the known to the new, analogy is a key element in this transformation.

Introduction

What is the spirit of teaching? How does one understand it and, even more, undertake it? Such inquiry is the focus of this essay, as I share from my experience a bit of my sense of the spirit of teaching. This is not, as such, a research or theoretical summation. It is a reflection on twenty years of study and practice related to teaching. The intent is not to pontificate on a new theory or statistical analysis related to education. Rather, the intent is to reflect on the spirit of teaching, and, in so doing, perhaps persuade readers of certain priorities for the practice of teaching.

I understand the spirit of teaching as essentially dialogue, and I undertake it as the same. The word "dialogue" retains its rich legacy. Derived from ancient Greek signifying a "word with, through, by means of, or among," the word is replete with the spirit of teaching's essence. It evokes a reality of conversation amidst a community. As such, it bespeaks an art of communication, and it is this art that I identify as the essential spirit of teaching.

My assumption, then, is that teaching is primarily an art not a science. It is an art, which integrates knowledge and know-how in communicating and sharing with others. While it is understood that training, technique, and skills contribute to this knowledge and know-how, it is also advanced that teaching is largely intuitive, and as such constitutes a dialogue between teacher and learner. Such dialogue rests with an imaginative connection being made between a learning context and content. In this respect, the goal of teaching and learning is not directed toward mere information but rather transformation. Furthermore, analogy is central to the approach for such transformation, as teachers and learners move together from the known to the new.

The focus of this essay, then, entails an exploration, though brief, of the dialogical relationship of learning, living, and loving in the role and spirit of teaching. As such, the essay constitutes a guided discussion, offering a kind of summary journey through which reflection on the spirit of teaching is related to renewal of the priorities and energy of teaching. In this manner, we will examine some key elements of sustaining the calling to teach amidst the challenges of learning. Focus will also be given to highlighting the spiritual and subjective touchpoints between teacher and students and between teaching and learning. The overall emphasis is on understanding and undertaking teaching as an art of communication which is passionate and transformative.

Invitation: Engaging the Spirit of Teaching as a Three-fold Dialogue

I suggest that the dialogue at the heart of teaching is three-fold. It entails a conversation among learning, living, and loving. This dialogue may be pictured as a circle with an equilateral triangle within it, whereby the three points of the triangle move symmetrically around the perimeter of the circle. Thus, each point contributes to the ongoing dialogue. Let us begin our journey with a few definitions for each of these points, that is components, of the dialogue.

First, learning bespeaks a plethora of ingredients. If one were to browse through a stack of magazines, tearing out pictures in response to the question "what does learning look like," one would easily come upon everyday pictures that suggest the association of teaching and learning with a wide variety of experiences: Teaching as coaching, mentoring, guiding, informing, supporting, and so forth; learning as growing, expanding, blossoming, becoming, and so forth.

Learning is not only lifelong; it is "life wide." That is, it is implicit in the breadth and depth of human experience. How, then, can we define it without limiting it? For the purpose of this essay, I would identify the following as among the key definitional ingredients of learning: information, ideas, insights, inspiration, integration, imagination, influence, and ingenuity. This not to suggest that this is all learning is, yet it is to suggest learning must at least be this.

Furthermore, I suggest that in such terms there is a progression of learning which signifies dialogue in development. These terms, then, are understood and ordered as follows:

Information	=	data from the world
Ideas	=	details for and of the mind
Insights	=	decisions from the soul
Inspiration	=	determination from the heart
Integration	=	direction toward wholeness
Imagination	=	display of energy
Influence	=	disposition toward change
Ingenuity	=	demonstration of growth

In this scheme of understanding, learning is a tapestry that is created through the interaction of these threads. It is never just one or the other, but is always a

progression toward all together. So much of the trend in the world of modern media and education presents learning as if it were primarily information—information obtainable from multi-media and Internet sources. Yet this mono-dimensional view of education is counterproductive to the true essence of learning and the spirit of teaching, both of which are a composite of many pieces. Information is just one piece, and perhaps only a rudimentary one. There are many other pieces and threads that must be connected and woven together, or else learning is truncated and not fulfilled. Thus, in the listing of learning aspects noted above, I seek to underscore the tapestry of learning, which requires many threads being contributed and accomplished.

Second, we must speak of living. In the connection between learning and living, we see the former in dialogue with the latter as content in context. The context is that reality out of which we live and learn. The content is that reality which informs how we live and learn. Such realities are personal, social, and historical. Herein, the focus of learning is related to the features of living. Learning cannot be achieved outside of our lives; it must be connected. This is our context of living. Yet learning is not simply the same as experience; it is more intentional. This is the content of learning. The spirit of teaching acknowledges and emphasizes both. What we learn and where we live are inter-related. Students want to see the connection between the context of their life and the content of their learning. Where and how we live informs our motivation and manner for study and the content therein. Likewise, students need to be shown the connection between the content of learning and the context of living. What and why we learn expands our world, our context, our understanding, and, thus, our undertaking in life.

Similarly, the conceptual and the concrete are engaged together toward an application of the learning's content to real life contexts. In this respect, living and learning inform each other reciprocally. The import of living to learning is the diverse dimensions of human experience. The context of living is a society of people and possibilities. The impact of learning on living is a nurture of competence, aspiration, and growth among learners. The content of learning for living is a capacity for society and possibilities by learners in living.

Context and content are in dialogue, as are the concrete and the conceptual. Herein, we may speak of the process of living as also entailing dialogue and development. In the relationship of living and learning, we may summarize this dialogue as follows:

Content	=	what and why we learn
Context	=	where and how we live
Concrete	=	external and hand-oriented life and learning
Conceptual	=	internal and head-oriented life and learning

Similarly, we may view the purpose of living in terms of dialogue and development. It may be summarized with use of the Latin terminology of "vivid" — living, as follows:

Nurture	=	training, nourishing, cherishing, and enlivening
Competence	=	surviving; life's coping skills
Aspiration	=	vivifying; life's goal setting
Growth	=	thriving; life's blossoming

In the dialogue of learning and living, then, the goal is a progression that supports a development in both learning and living. I have endeavored to capture something of this development in my reflection " Opening the World," as follows:

Opening the World
Thoughts open one's world,
Opening up to ideas and possibilities,
Like the refreshing breeze of the horizon,
Moving one outward to embrace meaning.
Idleness closes one's world,
Closing in with introspections and problematics,
Like the suffocating dampness of a dungeon,
Moving one inward to be entangled by monologue.
For dialogue entails a learning, a learning to live.
Knowledge and ignorance are engaged in battle.
Education is a pilot through the turmoil.
Amidst the fury the learning process forges a gateway,
opening one to a world of possibilities,
so that what one might become is not sacrificed to what one has been,
and, rather, that who one is opens bravely to whom one may be.

Third, we must connect loving to the circular dialogue. The word and its reality could easily involve a much greater investigation of the meaning of love than the brevity of this essay permits. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this essay we may define love, especially in relationship to learning and living, in terms of edification, empathy, and enjoyment. In this respect, love constitutes a way of holding together living and learning.

Love is a kind of glue in the dialogue. Briefly, these aspects of love may be noted as follows:

Edification	=	building up people for the learning journey
Empathy	=	identifying with our common journey
Enjoyment	=	embracing the joy of the journey

A simple story (passed on in different forms) of a teacher's experience with a student may illustrate the point. Some years ago a teacher had a life changing experience. It began with an encounter with a student, whom we will call Billy. The teacher, whom we will call Ms. Smith, inherited a litany of reports on Billy from his previous teachers, summarizing that he was a slow learner, unkempt, unfocused, had problems at home—a sick mother, a disinterested dad, and so forth. The report from the year before noted that his mother had died. Ms. Smith's work with Billy confirmed the same—that he was a difficult student. At Christmas time, the students brought in small gifts to their teacher. The one from Billy was crudely wrapped. She opened it quietly and properly acknowledged the gift—a broken necklace and cheap perfume, which, in a gesture the class, she sprayed on a bit. She knew there was nothing more to be expected from Billy. After school, he approached her and said that she smelled like his mother used to, and he hoped she liked his mother's necklace.

When the children had all gone home, Ms. Smith got on her knees, and after

a brief conversation with God, apparently, she rose determined not to be just a teacher, but to be a new teacher—an agent of love and compassion toward her students. She became resolved to give attention and support to all her students, and especially those, like Billy, who needed it most. By year's end, Billy showed significant improvement in his studies.

Some years later, Ms. Smith got a note from Billy. It informed her that he was graduating fourth in his high school class. Four years later, another note informed her that he was graduating second in his college class. Four years later, yet another note announced that he was about to become a medical doctor and also be married. He asked Ms. Smith to come and sit in his mother's place at the wedding. She went to that wedding and sat where Billy's mother would have sat. She deserved to sit there, for she had done something that Billy could never forget. She had shared the spirit of teaching with him, and he had never been the same. Neither had she.

The spirit of teaching requires a demonstration of love that brings and holds the learning and living together in harmony. Such a love on the part of a teacher entails not only a love for the subject, a love for the art of teaching, and a love for the ethos of education, but it must include a love for the students—collectively and individually. The spirit of teaching weds a passion for teaching with a compassion for students.

Stepping to the Spirit of Teaching

The spirit of teaching requires a number of significant components, somewhat like steps, by which the journey of dialogue is made. First, there is the connection between reality and poetry in the spirit of teaching. In this regard, teaching entails connecting substance and symbol. As such it constitutes an unfolding of the dialogue of learning, living, and loving. In the poem "Unfolding," the author likens a poem to a flower unfolding. The same image might be appropriated for the spirit of teaching. For teaching means unfolding and facilitating connections for learners.

Such connections, as we have noted, must be made between the context of their lives and the content of their learning. Likewise, such connections must be made between the substance and symbols which inform our learning, living, and loving. By substance I refer to the what and where of our learning, living, and loving. This is the concrete of our context and content. This is reality. It is the ordinary and everyday. By symbol I refer to the why and how of learning, living, and loving. This is the conceptual, and often pictorial, representation of that context and content. This is poetry. It helps us see behind and beyond the ordinary and everyday. It helps us envision and embrace both reality and new reality.

I endeavor to summarize this connection in my reflection "Learning to Surge," as follows:

Learning to Surge
There are rhythms, like waves, in life,
And rhythms in our responses to life.
We may engage or withdraw.
Blossom or wither. Thrive or just survive.
Imagination is the force of waves surging or receding.
Learning invites us to imagine and surge.

For education is a promising tide of opportunity.
Amidst the rhythms of life, dreams are possible.
Dreams are not idleness. Dreams bespeak imagination.
Imagination is the power of waves.
The power to dream and to do. Not just to sit but to surge.
Education informs; Dreams nurture; Imagination awakens.
Imagination is the surge of education giving birth to new possibilities.
Imagination surges when awakened by learning.
Imagination awakens us to new horizons.
When imagination surges, the sea parts and the world opens wide.
What we dream we believe we can do.
The justice we envision we can undertake.
Together in labor, learning, and life,
we may find a harmony in our rhythms,
and a vitality in our dreams.

In connecting reality and poetry, teaching happens through movement and metaphor, with the latter being midwife for the former. Let me comment briefly on each.

Learning is facilitated through movement. The spirit of teaching is the pilot for such movement. Learning essentially is moving from the known to the new. What we know is the starting point for proceeding to what we can know. As learners we move from the known to the unknown, from the known to the new. Teachers must facilitate this journey as guides on a pathway.

This movement is not just linear. It is, in fact, quite circular, even spherical, rolling, and engaging in a manner that invites people in and involves them. As teachers, we need to discern at what point a learner can get on the learning trail, as it were. We begin there and help them keep moving. Entry points are perhaps like spots on a merry-go-round. Students may get on and off, and then back on as they move toward deeper understanding and competency in a subject. The teacher's role entails discerning how a student can make the connections to move forward. This means helping students identify what they know, and then support them as they move to what's new. For instance, in studying history, we first identify what we know about a person, a time period, an issue, and so forth. Then we move from that to new information and understanding. Much the same is true in other subjects, like language and mathematics. We move from what we know to what is new. We build on the known in embracing the new. The key aspect in the spirit of teaching at this point is discernment. Teachers must be able to discern where students are in the journey, help them identify what they know, and then make connections to their next step—moving to the new.

At the heart of this movement is the power of dialogue, sharing, repetition, and reinforcement. Since the movement of learning is not linear, it is never done. We cannot say at any point that we have finished with a topic for good. We must return in order to continue forward. The circular character to learning means that as teachers and learners we are ever moving back, around, through, and beyond the topics and skills we engage. Perhaps the image of a spiral most aptly captures this sense of movement. We move through the learning process ever onward, but always with a revisiting of where we've been, even as we journey on toward where

we're heading.

This movement of learning is significantly undertaken through metaphor. The role of the teacher is to offer poetic pictures of reality and understanding in a manner that helps people envision and engage the subject of the journey. Central to this teaching practice is the power of analogy. As a learner, what I know helps me see what I can learn. The teacher must affirm what is known and open up what can be learned. This can often best be done through the use of analogy, metaphor, illustration, example, and so forth. In explaining something new, the teacher must start with something known. This empowers the student to begin the journey with confidence. Students who give up the journey often do so at the beginning, for they feel lost and overwhelmed. They have not been adequately prepared for the journey. Metaphor prepares for movement. A teacher opens the pathway by providing analogies and illustrations, which help the student, understand the new learning in terms of previously known learning.

A few brief examples may illustrate the point. One of my English courses is entitled "Writing is Like Driving a Car." It is a curriculum that makes an analogy between the process of writing and the practice of driving. For most adult students, this analogy is a ready entry point for understanding and undertaking the challenges of writing. We approach a written message as being like a direction and destination. We want to go somewhere, and we have to utilize certain skills and follow certain rules in getting there successfully. A message is like a destination. Writing styles are like road directions. Parts of a sentence are like parts of a car. Punctuation points are like road signs. And on and on, we move through the process of writing, gaining new insights and skills, while revisiting the analogy to driving when we need reminders of what we know and how the parts all fit and move together.

Similarly, in my math class, "Math is Like Spending Money and Paying Taxes," we continually return to the more tolerable parts of math, namely its connections to money, when we must grapple with its difficult parts, which, like paying taxes, may be undesirable but necessary. Students understand money, or at least want to do so. Thus, math undertaken in terms of money skills makes math more accessible to many students, even those with "math phobias." The point is not that math is taught only in terms of money, but that the connection to money is revisited and reframed at numerous junctures in order to refreshen and renew student motivation and confidence in tackling new learning.

In approaching many other subjects, similar connections and illustrations must be made—both as entry points into the subject and refueling spots along the journey. In teaching history and government, connections must be constantly made, for instance, between the family and larger society, between personal history and social history, between the individual and the community. Every lesson of history can be correlated to students' contemporary experience. The teacher's role is to help make such connections. The more the teacher models such connections, the more students are empowered to make them for themselves. In approaching a subject like ethics, I often begin with helping students talk through and identify their life connections to the subject. A survey of organizations in which they are involved is a good starting point. Groups such as Boy Scouts, churches, and civic clubs become ready springboards for the subject. They provide an entry point, but also a stopping off point in the course of the unfolding study. The same is true of

exercises in values clarification, wherein students by examining case histories reflect upon what they think, feel, and believe. Studies in religion, sociology, culture, and so forth, similarly require constant analogies between the known and the new. The use of magazines, newspapers, pictures, films, music, etc. provide windows of insight into subjects which are often foreign, even intimidating for students. Analogy makes possible the movement from the known to the new.

Metaphor facilitates movement because it points simultaneously to what students know and what they are about to learn. They can see in two directions and are empowered to use what they know to tackle what is new. Providing people with illustrations not only gives them confidence for the learning journey, but helps them understand the connection to their life. Herein content and context are wedded. This power of analogy rests with the teacher's ability to paint pictures and provide illustrations for students, and to connect the content and context, conceptual and concrete, known and new.

In my experience I have come to appreciate analogy as perhaps the key art form in the spirit of teaching. Using analogy requires imagination and creativity. It means teachers must be prepared and capable of moving outside the boundaries of a subject at any moment in order to cite or create an analogy, illustration, or example which will help clarify the learning focus for students and enable them to move with it confidently. All in all, analogies and illustrations provide access to learning. They are like on ramps. Yet they also include revisiting, reminding, and renewing. They are also like pit stops and rest areas.

Second, there is the partnership of ethos and ethics in the spirit of teaching. Teaching, I suggest, is pursued through the setting and place of students in conversation with the soul and profession of teachers. The setting and place bespeak ethos; the soul and profession bespeak ethics. Let us comment briefly on both.

When speaking of the setting and place of students, we underscore the overall context out of which they come and the atmosphere for learning we seek to create. The learning ethos is the environment, which makes learning possible. It is inviting and involving, not necessarily institutional. Buildings, programs, curricula, and resources do not in and of themselves make for an appropriate ethos. They may be supportive components of such, but the ethos is primarily created by the teacher, and especially the teacher informed by the spirit of teaching.

An inviting and involving ethos offers an engagement of learning that is steeped in life and love. It is learning that is connected to reality. It is also learning that is communicated with regard. In this way, the ethos for learning depends on the ethics of the teacher. A teacher's passion for teaching and compassion for students is expressive of a teacher's grounding in the soul and profession of teaching. Who a teacher is as a person is as important as what she or he knows as a teacher. Thus, a professional ethic and personal soul must undergird teaching.

In one point in the film *Dances With Wolves*, the lone soldier at a deserted fort is suddenly awakened by the rumble of buffalo on the move. He immediately understands the significance of this, as he has become neighborly with local Sioux people who have befriended him and who have been waiting patiently for the arrival of the buffalo, which are so important to the Sioux way of life. After notifying the Sioux village, he heads out with them in the necessary, and nearly sacred, hunt, only to find that white hunters, in a quest for trophies, have arrived there first and left the buffalo herd decimated. In looking at the carnage that rifles

have wrought, the soldier concludes with a comment to himself that such conduct could only bespeak people without soul. In this decisive moment, the soldier moved philosophically and ethically from his own white American culture to that of the Native Americans who had befriended him.

The spirit of teaching requires soul. A teacher must have heart and soul. The professional dimension to teaching represents the knowledge, training, skills, understanding, expertise, experience, and professional ethic that are required of quality teachers. Profession, however, cannot be mere veneer. It must be part and parcel of soul. Teachers are lead learners, and thus they are models of soul. That word "soul" is derived from the Greek term *psuche*, which bespeaks personhood. The spirit of teaching is rooted in a teacher's sense of self and leads to an understanding of the students' sense of self. Such teaching bespeaks the integration of one's understanding of self, the world, and others. In giving expression to a passion for teaching and a compassion for learners, the teacher models such personhood in affirming it in others.

In this manner, teaching is undertaken as a kind of conversation, which gives birth to creative dialogue. The practices of democratic discussion and personal regard are vital to the ethic by which teachers fashion an ethos for learning. Through this spirit conversation encourages dialogue, and dialogue nurtures direction, and direction opens toward discovery.

Third, there is in the spirit of teaching a partnership of exposition and encouragement. Knowledge is experience and empowerment. Life is both the content and context for learning; life and learning are liberated by encouragement. That portion of learning we call insight is steeped in an experience of discovering personal truth. Wisdom is personified in a teacher's communication. In this regard, a teacher is a mentor in partnership with learners. Wisdom is a truth and a learning gained from both exposition and encouragement. Personal encouragement from a teacher is as important as professional expertise. Such encouragement is not simply an occasional "pat on the back," but is constitutive to the ongoing exposition of the subject. It sees that humanity is more important than technology in the learning process, for humanity means engaging and responding, and technology can often mean isolation and less interaction. Since learning is far more than mere information, the learning process is far more than simply resources—books, computers, etc. It is centered in the personal presence of the teacher who displays and nurtures an open-mindedness toward life, learning, and love.

Fourth, there is in the spirit of teaching interplay between the meaning and mode of learning. The meaning is the "what" and "why." The mode is the "how" and "when." There must be a depth of communication that nurtures transformation in students. Transformation entails a widening of horizons. It entails transforming one's understanding, worldviews, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotions, which constitute our meaning perspectives. In this both teacher and student alike are transformed through the learning process. Teachers seek to nurture critical thinking, and may ask questions as much as answer them. Herein, teachers help students focus on how we know and not just what we know. Learning as transformation engages growth and change. The word "metamorphosis," derived from the Greek term for transformation, bespeaks a changing in terms of unfolding, much like the butterfly emerging from the cocoon. Growth and change move reciprocally from learning to life as teachers facilitate a dialogue. Transformation

fosters creativity, concern, confidence and competence among students. As a learning goal, it links what we think, feel, and do, and stirs imagination, fosters values, and prompts new ventures.

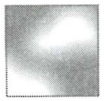
Such a breadth of communication needs versatility. Its purpose requires a process. Thus, the spirit of teaching must include both a recognition of learning styles and a repertoire of teaching styles. Teachers must be equipped with every insight into how students learn, and what will facilitate their learning. Teachers must be prepared with a versatile inventory of skills, resources, exercises, and responses to utilize in the ongoing process of learning. Humor is certainly chief among the aids to the spirit of teaching. Wit and wisdom must be allies. There is a saying which asserts that "things work out best for the people who make the best out of the way things work out." This is certainly true for the arena of learning. Teachers must feature and foster a sense of humor, which allows the learning process to be fun, not afraid of failure, ready for adjustments, and flexible enough to bend and not break among the stresses and challenges of learning and individual learners.

Fifth, and finally, there is a symbiosis of creativity and compassion in the spirit of teaching. In maintaining that the art of communication and caring is central to the spirit of teaching, we advance that there is a mutuality among teachers and students, which nurtures their common journey. Communication is realized in creativity; caring is rooted in compassion. Creating windows for students as learners goes hand in hand with expressing concern for students as persons. Creativity is relentless hard work. It can only be replenished by a caring concern for students that brings a teacher back to the drawing board time and again to find a way to communicate, connect, and construct experiences for learning. This indeed, in my view, is at the very heart of the spirit of teaching.

Moving to and from a Spirit of Teaching

Moving to and from a spirit of teaching is an ongoing journey. It is never a done deal, a deed done and gone. It is always evolving and unfolding. Teachers learn about teaching in much the same way students learn about anything—through the dialogue of life, learning, and loving that creates connections between context and content, and moves us forward in spiral like advances. Teachers, too, need analogies to perceive their role and tasks as teachers. They need to revisit their purpose and process on a regular basis in continually understanding and undertaking the spirit of teaching in the ever-changing circumstances of the classroom. And they need to do so in a manner that is fervent, fun, and fulfilling, not only for themselves but for all those involved in the journey of learning, life, and love.

Wesley J. Mills, D.Min., is a multidisciplinary educator with over 20 years of teaching experience, especially with respect to the interface of the humanities and social sciences. He currently serves as academic coordinator for Old Orchard Beach/ Saco Adult Education and is on the adjunct faculty of the University of New England, York County Technical College, and Andover Newton Graduate School in Boston. In addition, he serves as director of the ABCOM Institute for Ministry, which provides continuing education for religious professionals in Maine. His formal education is in political science, theology, and moral education and ethics.



The Spirit of Teaching in Practice

Spirited Teaching: Returning Enchantment to the Haunted Classroom

Willard D. Callender, Jr.

13

Classrooms tend to be haunted by the musty spirits of the past (paternalism, school architecture) and the breezy spirits of the future (standards, testing, careers, jobs, technology, professionalism). This essay encourages students and teachers to bring their own animation and zest to the classroom in order to return wonder and presence to learning.

Classrooms are haunted, you know. I wish I had known that when I started teaching 40 years ago. I could have saved myself a lot of grief. Well, never mind. I warn you now, future teachers, so you will be able to spirit yourself and your students through the nether-nether regions of education more smoothly than I did. This letter is meant as a primer on how to transform the haunted classroom into a more enchanted one.

I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. I point you toward your own experience. Look at the desks, the rows of straight-backed chairs, the clock, the dusty floor, the drab institutional colors, the improbably perfect script letters at the top of the blackboard, the windows that don't open, the factory architecture of the school. Do the archeology! Scenes of suffering, right? Think of your own stories, of sister and brother stories, of parent and grandparent stories. Think of Dr. Grandgrind, the hard-as-coal, fact-ridden school administrator in Dickens' *Hard Times*. Remember the horrible tests. Remember the textbooks. Remember the ridicule. Alright, remember, too, the good times, when you won the spelling bee, when you were the only student who knew the location of Madagascar, when an admirer passed a flattering note to you. Ghosts everywhere.

You can feel its history when you enter a classroom, and your spirit drops or soars accordingly with the memories. But it isn't just history that haunts the classroom, the surrounding present does too. Have you noticed how frequently bomb hoaxes are getting called in? Daily at a couple of schools in your area, right? Have you noticed how convinced we've become that gun violence in their school could happen as easily in our school? Don't you sense that it's more probable now that someone will bring a gun to class than it was when you were in school? This

premonition, please note, confesses a big, dirty secret: that all schools—we surmise—are fundamentally alike and that a lot of angry people are in them. So the classroom is haunted, alright, even before you introduce yourself, greet the students, and pass out the syllabus.

But that's not all. There are other spirits floating about the modern classroom: the spirits of technology, business, patriarchy, competition, athletics, politics, community boosterism, and patriotism all are present, with their competing demands on the teacher, along with the spirits of efficiency, urgency, and speed (go faster, go faster, go faster) and the spirits of careerism and employment (go to college, go to college, go to college; get a job, get a job, get a job). Need I mention—gulp—the spirit of performance standard setting (tougher standards, tougher standards, tougher standards; test them, test them, test them)?

How many spirits have I named so far? Twenty maybe. A classroom is always the dwelling place of spirits; better accept that fact, it is inescapable. Don't be spooked by it. The trick is to air out the classroom to let the good spirits it.

Admittedly, spirit is an ambivalent, even disquieting concept. There are many reasons why you could feel uneasy about invoking it as a concept in education: spirit can't be seen, it's not a scientific idea; biologists haven't been able to make much sense or use of it; the history of spirit overlaps the history of alchemy, and is associated famously with high jinx and intoxication, with Dionysus, with the prattling of the revelers in Euripides' *The Bacchae*; spirit blurs the line between education and religion; spirits—probably with good cause—are widely suspected of being malevolent as well as good, and some are thought akin to ghosts, angels, elves, gremlins, and a host of other ephemeral and suspicious characters. Spirits, by reputation, take any form, cross great distances, sweep people off their feet, and transport them away. Spirits create tempests—in teapots and brains—and incite frenzy. All of these are reasons to leave spirit completely out of education. And yet, get over it, we can't!

What do we professional educators do with this bottle of genies? We recommend *professionalism*. We offer professionalism as the way of banishing—or at least controlling—the nastier spirits. But you should be aware of an important fact: *professionalism is a spirit too*! And while I'm for professionalism as a protector against abuse, injustice, unfairness, and bias, and as an advocate for objectivity, fairness, competence, order, and discipline, it should never be forgotten that the spirit of professionalism competes with other more zestful spirits of teaching and sometimes diminishes the joy of learning needlessly. Also, professionalism can be used as a mask to disappear behind, hiding one's own spirit and personal radiance under the proverbial barrel, beyond the gaze of students. The spirit of professionalism haunts classrooms as well as calms them, and too often banishes more divine spirits from dwelling there.

Say it loudly, spirit is essential to learning, and all too often the wrong spirits pervade and hold sway. These words—"dwell," "pervade," "hold sway"— convey several powerful ideas about spirit. The most important is that while there are many—in fact innumerable—contending spirits, *one* spirit typically wins out and gives emotional coherence to the occasion. Distinct spirits *unify* into a grand spirit; either one achieves dominion over the others or the contending spirits merge into some grand broil or funk. Stated less mysteriously, a specific climate or atmosphere comes over the classroom, dominating the emotional weather. Watch out though,

weather can change rapidly; make a mean-spirited move and the atmosphere is poisoned instantaneously.

A second idea: spirit, while invisible, can be *felt*. It is felt with the skin. It is felt with the nerves. Situations are said to be "palpable," "tense," "electric," "heavy," "light," "depressing," "overwhelming," "suffocating," "exhilarating." Most often educators liken spirit to air and breathing, using the metaphors of "inspiration," and "aspiration," and—mixed with a little sweat—"perspiration." These may be as good personal indicators of classroom climate as any: how easy it is for you to breathe (and whether you're sweating). Also, how you feel in the pit of your stomach. Spirit is one of those wonderful forms of existence that we feel instinctively and know unerringly, but can't nail down very precisely in words—no, we cannot.

A third idea: spirit is about home, the place where the soul dwells. Either one is comfortable, settled in place, dwelling there, or spirit is restless, roams, feels displaced in the world. This raises the question of how comfortable people feel in your classroom? How comfortable you feel in your own classroom? Is it a good place to hang out, settle down, dwell, and entertain the muses that might guide learning there?

This gets us to the nub of the issue. To be born is to be animated. Either you're spirited, or you're dead! I'm animated, you're animated, therefore our discussions can be animated. What a contrast focusing on our own spirits makes in comparison to focusing on the spirits we've been talking about, the spiritual remains of the haunting dead and the daunting influences of absent authorities. The issue is the relative standing teachers and students are to give to their own spirits in oxygenating the atmosphere and in lighting the fires that warm and illuminate their classroom. Do they light the fire or is this the exclusive prerogative of the surrounding, but absent, authorities? I say we light the fire!

For teacher and student to be fully *present* to each other, they must communicate as spiritedly as possible. The first thing you must do if you want to be a spirited teacher is get your head into it: be there mentally, heart and soul, when the students show up. It's not easy—who among us doesn't have cares to worry about? But it's necessary to forget your cares in order to give students your undivided attention. Be present! The students must be too. That's top priority. So you'll want to employ several proven practices: form a circle, make sure the students introduce themselves, ask them to say why they are there and what their hopes are for the course, describe yourself honestly and humbly, tell and show them what you love about the subject, and engage them in free, honest, wide-ranging discussion as soon as possible. Then it's honest listening, full-hearted response, and zestful discussion. You're seeking this with each student. Don't make them compete with each other. Why should they?

Don't you see? It is all about presence: your presence, their presence, the presence of the subject matter. Are our classroom presentations misrepresentations of the present? The haunted classroom we have been discussing *substitutes* for, and is *alienated* from real life: knowledge is fractured, removed from scenes of original discovery and buried into little subject caskets and repositories; such dead knowledge is then processed and fabricated into curriculum bits to be transmitted assembly-line fashion to students, by graded levels, fearful tests, and programmed degrees; the student is *removed* from real life to acquire these tidbits; and you, the teacher, have been placed in an *official role* that encourages you to hide your iden-

tity and cares, while coercing the students by sundry control mechanisms into standard performances and successful test scores. All of this conspires to insist on pale *misrepresentations*, rather than passionate *representations* of the present. The background message is: we—the amorphous "*they*" called society—are in control here, it's our economy, stupid, that's important, you are not, so learn what we want taught in a way we want it used!

No, teachers! No, students! Don't allow it! Be present! Inspirit your own classroom.

Here's an interesting paradox to attain in your classroom: when people are fully present, *here now*—engaged and attentive to each other's thoughts, each person is also fully someplace else, in an imaginative *there*, in personal space. Where? In their own cares! In the domains, scenes, and situations that constitute for them real life. We reside most passionately in our innermost imagination, each within his or her own life story and world view. Domains *out there*, in the storied imagination, represent memories and hopes, fears and loves, visions for a better future. Spirit resides for us in the dreamy world that passes vividly before our eyes—as a movie video passes— while carrying out our daily routines and living our lives. So the more present we are to each other in passionate discussion of subject matter, the more applicable the learning is to us in the 'real' worlds we live in beyond school. Knowledge, originally generated in exciting scenes of spirited adventure, is thereby returned from the alienated limbo of abstract formulae to fresh new scenes of visualized applications. The spirit of learning is a traveling spirit that transports furthest the traveler who is most at home in the world. As Thoreau pointed out, one must be well-seated to travel the world.

These considerations and advice may sound self-referential, isolating, inconsiderate of public concerns, and neglectful of the needs of suffering people everywhere. But I do not find that to be the usual result of following such advice. Nor do I find that the needs of the world are so clear and certain that only my or your lectures and strictures, accompanied by copious reading, can be expected to elucidate and redress them. To the contrary, it is my experience that a free society of discussants, embroiled in an informed, controlled, spirited classroom discussion, each vigorously pursuing her or his own questions and concerns, approximates a village, a democratic community—similar to the way a poll sample approximates an electorate. Every vital classroom is a small society and an approximate world. The result is that knowledge—fractured into disciplines, and isolated into issues and interests of concern mainly to academic minds, great and small—breaks out of this isolation and reconnects in exuberant shared, public, and personal possibilities. Civic life is restored even as each class member advances his or her own understanding, skills, attitudes, and prospects. The student grows as person and citizen.

A good classroom, we can see, is a community in several senses. It is people meeting common needs. It is people bound by common interests. It is people with a common quest. It is people working together. It is people who share common norms of respect and support. It is people who by togetherness allow their members to individuate into distinct, unique persons. It is people approximating humankind and civil society. It is people talking honestly. It is every member saying what they think without others leaving the room in disgust and anger. It is the opposite of war.

Now, note this. The classroom, in such spirited discussions, becomes haunted again, this time in a productive way—infused not by stale authority but by the internal demons of the participants. The students, following your example, feel comfortable speaking honestly, sharing the horrors they have seen and the ideas that haunt and bedevil *them*. Yes, I'm sure you know it, people are haunted too. When they trust each other, though, and feel enthusiastic about what is going on in class, they will say most anything—they will say the damnedest things. This willingness unleashes a rich stream of thought—an affluent effluence—for auditing, discussion, reflection, and learning. People change when they hear themselves talk, gain honest feedback, entertain exhilarating ideas, and receive personal affirmation.

Part of this, to be sure, is that most people—Pascal was so right to suggest—cannot speak four sentences without contradiction—I know I cannot; open my mouth in front of you and I can hear my internal auditor saying: that's not true! But who has to deal with their contradictions if they only talk to themselves. When a person opens up thought to inspection in the enchanted classroom, with an open mind and in a spirit of discovery, new insights are gained, fresh conclusions arrive. They change their own minds. Indeed all learning, in the last resort, is self-determined. A person can argue forever that the earth is flat against your protestations that it is round, but if he can hear himself say it just the right way, standing on the right fault line, detecting the absurdity of it all, presto, he rounds the world and readies himself for new absurdities.

Never tell a student something isn't true, at least I never do. I'm so convinced that most ideas are partial, unanchored, misunderstood, misguided, incomplete, wrong that I find myself responding: "that's most interesting," "let's think about that," "let me see if I understand," "what would you think of this response?", "that seems to raise this question," "how do you think,"—turning to the class—"Max Weber might respond to that statement (or Carl Marx, Jesus Christ, Virginia Woolf, Mary McCarthy, etc.)?" Students own their thoughts and must answer their own questions, solve their own problems. Your job is to help them think better, use good information, see possibilities, appreciate other points of view, and confront ideas in a way that allows them to make up their own minds. That is what understanding means: finding the ground to *stand under* one's own beliefs.

The world is all too certain. Students show up in the classroom with remarkable belief in what they say, as if sincerity and forcefulness equals truth. You can't just blush at such assertions or point out the preposterous—although that has deleterious effects on well-chosen occasions. Instead, it is useful to examine basic definitions of terms, and consider the often conflicting meanings of words that are out there in sleepy, habitual culture. You said *necessary*, didn't you, where does this necessity come from? You said *cause* , didn't you, what force can you point to? Or, to preempt the high ground early in a course, try questioning the subject matter. This course is an introduction to adult education. What should we mean by *adult*? By *education*? By the combined form *adult education*? This chemistry course explores the vagaries and tendencies of matter. What is *matter*? Why does understanding matter *matter*? This biology course explores the flow of life. What is *life*? The extant frozen world of dumb certainties melts away into exciting questions and quests.

What I try to do is help students gain comfort with uncertainty by asking

questions. When people are actively uncertain—in an energetic state—they join a search, they want to find out. Therefore, don't feel bad about asking questions. Questions wake people up from a soporific state, and make them zestful searchers again. You are not destroying people's beliefs when you ask questions, you are helping make the world sparkle, you are reinvigorating thought. So, canonize the question, show students the delight and ecstasy of living in the generative cocoon of the what, when, where, how, why—in the awe, wonder, and mystery of the observable world.

Here's an important fact about learning that some teachers have felt ambivalent about, but that you should not: when it comes to zestful learning any heartfelt spirit will do. Yes, it is wonderful when the students are eager for learning, attentive to your every word, ecstatically attuned to the harmonies of the spheres. But anger, depression, sadness, and other negative feelings will do quite as well in originating learning. If that is what a person feels, that is mood that will motivate learning. Take people as they are. Speak to the person. Anger! Wonderful! What about? Take us through the unjust scene. Let us question justice.

One of the oldest ideas about life is that it becomes so hard and unmanageable that most of us sell it out, determine to forget the pain and enjoy a little pleasure. We put ourselves to sleep, sleepwalk through the day, make ourselves creatures of dead habit, and justify the courtesy suicide by blaming other people, exorcising (or is it exercising?) our personal demons. People need safe houses in which to say crazy things under supportive circumstances, to state their mad ideas as if they were rational. The spirit of education, fully appreciated, is therapeutic. Brewing up a spirit of generous uncertainty helps people heal, even as it rejuvenates childlike wonder. It feels good to give up bad ideas in favor of better ones, and to discover ideas that affirm rather than negate life. Yes, teachers, one of our roles is to resurrect the dead—and then, to lighten up life, and enlighten.

In all of this work, conduct it so as to put your identity at risk, and help students feel comfortable in putting their identities at risk. Our firmly claimed personae are products of learning, not nature uncovered, not genotype revealed. Such certainties limit possibilities and impede fresh learning. Help students see that cocksure egos are more often enemies than friends of self understanding. The world we know is not out there, apart and beyond, but relative to our agency and point of view. Knowledge is relational to self. The sentiment that infuses reality is uncontrollable unless its owner is open to self-examination, and able to account for that feeling in personal history attribution and storytelling lore. Help your students realize that the self that emerges from the learning is superior to the self that engineers the learning. Help the ego abdicate its attitude of defense in favor of flights of good humor and bouts of heartfelt humility.

Let me share a vital fact that artists everywhere know, but others find hard to believe, until they've experienced it themselves. If a person works hard, thinks hard, and searches for truth, one's mind will work on its own without your having to will it. No discovery has influenced my own teaching more than this. Where for many years my teaching had been guided by the habit of preparing very specific, detailed, and complete lectures, and giving them as planned, I found one day that if after the same level of preparation I simply let my mind go in response to questions and points of view raised by students, it would freely guide my head and mouth to answer. The willful ego, which had guided me previously, could, in effect, sit in its chair, listening to what my mind and mouth were saying, and learn from it, like anyone else. In the same way that the painter does not know the picture she will eventually paint before and as she begins, and finds out as her viewers do in the process of painting, I have learned to find out what I think about issues raised in class in the process of hearing myself, and others, address them. This more *stillful* way of listening to myself has come to supplement, and gently displace, an earlier and more familiar habit of *willing* myself to think. I feel that I'm now in a better position to recognize the fallacies in my own thoughts and more easily give up indefensible ideas. Oops, maybe that's just another self-deceiving rationalization!

When the teacher is comfortable allowing his or her mind to run free, students, by example, follow. The call(or need, or reward) for dogmatic thought drops away. The pleasure becomes the pursuit of truth, the framing of possibilities, the appeal of ideas. When students feel the comfort and the trust, they allow their own thoughts to be wide-ranging, creative, tentative, and provisional. They start saying and writing things they never have said before, original thoughts that surprise and delight them upon reflection. Did I write that? Is that my idea? I like it! I didn't know I could write that well. That's one of our jobs: to admire their work, to mirror back to students what they have said in a way that allows them to appreciate its promise and excellence.

I can hear myself saying: let's not get supernatural about all this. My problem is—I might as well admit—that I don't like it when people invoke divine intervention to account for the minor sorrows and successes of everyday life. It seems to me that much of the world's damage is done by people who claim to really, really know God, to know Him so well as to explain not just their own sins, but the sins of our woeful lives as well, and to prescribe external (and often eternal and infernal) remedies accordingly for our benefit. Why should the dictates of their God circumscribe our poor behavior? Rule yourself tightly, if you must, but leave me out of your harrowing prophecies. God seems to me a wonderful possibility, provisional in all the best meanings of that term, much too hopeful and precious to name. Those who claim to definitely know God will more likely make an icon of Him in their image, not an image of themselves in His.

All of this is prologue, an admission of my own eccentricities. The spirit world, which might strike you as other-worldly, interests me mainly in its this-worldly aspects. I'm interested more in how people live exuberantly than I am in the fearful ways that immortality is often pursued. When I tell you that the classroom in which informed students allow their minds and mouths to run free is an *amusing* classroom, or a *meditative* classroom, or a *mediated* classroom, or an *inspired* classroom, or an *enchanted* classroom, or a *spirited* classroom, I am noting that there is *spiritual presence* in the classroom from beyond the classroom—but I feel no need myself to name what that *presence* is. Artists, at such times, speak of guidance from their muse, of tutelage from guardian spirits, of receiving creative ideas, of abiding instinct, and of following their demons. Likewise I know that the ideas I speak when I allow my mind to go free are not strictly mine. They seem to come out of the blue, as dreams come to mind, not arrive as the products of willful research or logical decision making. While teaching, I feel at such times as if I am a kind of radio tower receiving ideas from the universe and mediating them into our classroom discussion for wider consideration. While I am thankful and glad for the

privilege of receiving such gifts, it would be arrogant to impose on the world a self-styled deity to account for it, thereby settling curiosity and transforming fresh learning into finished lessons. No, I would rather reside in the process of learning. How about you?

For me, the spirit of teaching is the spirit of learning, the spirit of learning is curiosity, curiosity is the desire to know, and the desire to know is childhood wonder. The divinity is in the air we breathe (our aspirations); in the light we see (our illusions, allusions, visions, illuminations); in the fire we feel (the excitement and incitement of the passionate quest); and in the heartbeat (the urge and the surge to know the truth). Our aim as teachers is to restore a sense of wonder to all the learning that goes on in our classrooms and in our lives. To the extent we succeed, our classrooms will be enchanted places, instead of the musty, nightmarish places they too often have been for so many people. And God, that most divine of possibilities, will remain a question still, and by association, a conductor to our continued exploration of all the questions of the world.

Willard D. Callender, Jr. is professor emeritus of adult education at the University of Southern Maine. His books include *The Joy of Learning* (1990) and *Reflections of a Fanatical Learner: Memories, Meanings and Musings* (University Press of America, 1995). He served as the fifth holder of the Walter E. Russell Chair in Education and Philosophy in 1988. In 1991 he was selected by his peers as the recipient of the University's Distinguished Faculty Award.

Humor in Teaching

Robert M. Sanford

14

This chapter provides a brief summary of the use of humor in formal academic instruction. It argues that humor itself is a manifestation of an alternative perception and that the ability to have more than one perception or view of a situation is an adaptive trait that enhances learning. Further, we need humor to reduce stress and help make learning fun. Care is required to ensure that the use of humor is appropriate in the classroom and other learning environments.

In my own education, which admittedly took many more years than necessary, I observed that most of the teachers and professors I have admired used humor in some form or another in their teaching. I also find this to be true for many of the "big name" academicians who have been my heros and role models, including such weighty luminaries as the paleontologist and historian of science Steven J. Gould, Nobel-winning physicist Richard P. Feynman, and biologist E. O. Wilson. It seems to me that virtually everyone uses humor to some degree or another because it is part of the human condition. At times it can create an almost irresistible analogy as when Einstein himself humorously explained the meaning of wireless signals: "The wireless telegraph is not difficult to understand. The ordinary telegraph is like a very long cat. You pull the tail in New York, and it meows in Los Angeles. The wireless is the same, only without the cat."

But what about the use of humor in more than an anecdotal fashion, as in pursuit of a degree? Is there a proper role for humor in education? Perhaps Aristotle doubted this when he noted "the roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet." The proliferation of Gary Larson and Sidney Harris cartoons on faculty doors in science departments and *New Yorker* cartoons in humanities departments suggest more than a passing role for humor. It seems safe to say that there are many of us who equate proper use of humor with the true spirit of teaching as a positive, inclusive process.

Although there seems to be a recent proliferation in the exchange of humorous information via the Internet, comedians, humor workshops, and other avenues (Teslow, 1995), humor has long been in the background of education. And not just in literature, where it is squarely seated in the works of Shakespeare and others (Boerman-Cornell, 2000), but also in science. Hawkey (1998) points out a classic example from the 19th century in which noted scientist James Clerk Max-

well wrote a parody of Robert Burns's poem "Coming through the Rye." It begins with the probabilistic behavior of gas molecules:

> Gin a body meet a body
> Flyin' through the air,
> Gin a body hit a body,
> Will it fly? And where?

Discourses on humor itself can be traced back to the ancient world; Aristotle, Plato, Cicero and others discussed the meaning of comedy (Paulos, 1985). Eminent researchers have studied the origins of laughter—even the great Darwin himself wrestled with this in his *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). Humor, as a cultural attribute, varies among different human societies and social groups (e.g., see Ziv, 1988 on national humor; Legman, 1982 on sexual humor and cultural variation; and Bremmer and Roodenburg, 1997 for a cultural history of humor).

Humor arises from the unexpected and the incongruous. Teslow (1995) summarizes the three main themes or theoretical bases commonly recognized in the literature of humor: theories of humor as relief for stress (Freud was one of the researchers in this area); theories of humor as a manifestation of superiority (described by the philosopher Hobbes); and incongruity theory. In incongruity, two or more ideas or things that are inappropriately or unusually paired produce unexpected or incongruous results. The philosopher Kant speculated on this theory (Teslow, 1995).

Clearly, humor as a manifestation of superiority is not a benefit to the classroom and may be correlated with aggressive behavior or have other maladaptive manifestations. Ryan and Kanjorski (1998) found that an appreciation of sexist humor was positively correlated with rape-related and other sexually aggressive attitudes and behaviors among college students. Humor as stress relief and humor as incongruity are the two appropriate areas for humor in the classroom because both have pedagogical benefit. Both can boost self-esteem and enhance learning (Berk, 1998; Teslow, 1995).

Who Studies Humor?

Comedians, writers, cartoonists, and other "humor professionals" study the practice of humor. Academicians in psychology and the field of education study the use of humor from a pedagogical perspective, focusing on humor as a stress reducer to help make learning fun. Much of this study is anecdotal, a relation of what works best according to individual experience in settings from kindergarten to college (Hill, 1993; Friedman et al., 1999; King, 1999; McMahon, 1999; Boerman-Cornell, 2000). Some make a strong argument for the overall benefits of a humorous approach (e.g., McMahon, 1999; Nilsen and Nilsen, 1999).

As one might expect, an individual teacher's orientation should be matched with the type and amount of humor employed in teaching. Someone who is not comfortable telling jokes should not tell jokes, for example, although he or she might feel freer to use cartoons or external sources of humor. A teacher with a low "humor orientation" need not use humor excessively. However, researchers who studied students in a college introductory communications class found that students with a high humor orientation learn best when the teacher has a high hu-

mor orientation, and students in general are more effective learners when there is at least some use of humor (Frymier and Wanzer, 1998; Wanzer and Frymier, 1999). The most effective use, even for graduate students, is in the reduction of stress through creating a positive classroom atmosphere (Hill, 1988; Steele, 1998; Wilson, 1998). Sometimes humor itself is a perspective within the subject matter, as in the use of political cartoons to study history (Heitzman 1998).

Among the many disciplines and practitioners to include humor research related to formal or informal education are the humanities, psychoanalysts, linguists, American studies, history, political scientists, artists, anthropologists, sociologists, health care professionals and behavioral neurobiologists. There exists an American Association for Therapeutic Humor (www.aath.org/). Seminars in humor abound in the corporate world and are increasingly available to educators. An International Journal of Humor Research is available and an international humor seminar is convened annually. There are numerous Internet web sites for humor in teaching, (www.humor.com) and there is even a "humor university" (www.humoru.com). Formal courses on humor are taught at the University of Central Oklahoma, Universidad Pontifica de Salamanaca, Bowdoin College, University of Washington, Miami University, and numerous other places around the world.

Why Use Humor?

I admit to a bias. I teach at three levels. First to cover the basics, what students need to get by in the course. The next level is aimed at the student who is ready for a deeper level of the material. And finally, the third level in which, frankly, I strive to do the entertaining myself—and the student who has a like-minded (need I say "high minded"?), subtle sense of humor. I find that students who appreciate my level three are also getting the material at level two. Perhaps this can be explained from the theory of humor as skewed perspective. Humor provides a different way of looking at material. Whenever something is looked at from more than one vantage point there is an increased possibility of gaining knowledge— this is basic cybernetic theory. Further, this additional perspective is provided in a manner that does not add stress. And in fact, I make sure that my level three stuff is not presented in the manner of an "in" joke that would be too easy and against my "code of self-amusement for today's professor," which has three components: do your job, do no harm, and entertain yourself. I try to do all three.

As for actual reasons for use of humor in the literature, Wanzer and Frymier (1999) and Teslow (1995) cite numerous sources on the benefits of humor in inclusive learning settings. Nilsen and Nilsen (1999) refute six "straw man" arguments against humor, including the position that humor detracts from serious teaching, that humor leads to censorship problems, that humor is harmful and that only humorists can effectively use humor. I have found humor to be an effective tool in classroom management, notably on occasion to channel a student's aggression or "wise-cracking" into positive energy.

Humor Media and Sources

Humor media can be divided into all of the normal range of communications media. Conveyances in the classroom typically include cartoons, jokes, shaggy dog stories, witty remarks, exaggeration, and distortion. Self-depreciating humor is safe to use if one can be in sufficient control of it to avoid any reduction in

status. Such humor can be double-edged as illustrated by Einstein, whom we can safely label a rather brilliant theoretical researcher, responding to a query with "If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?"

In casting about for material to use for humor, sources can come from an individual student, the class as a whole, the teacher, the class setting, the subject itself, a temporary situation that is some combination of setting and subject, and external factors such as classroom interruptions or things outside the window literally or figuratively.

Issues in Using Humor

One task is to find the appropriate range—too little humor and the teacher might be seen as boring or humorless. Too much humor is flippant and could denote lack of respect or incompetence. Fortunately there is a fairly wide threshold. A teacher with a low humor orientation can compensate by communicating great enthusiasm for the subject matter. A teacher with a high humor orientation has to be careful not to treat the class too much as an audience. Ultimately, questions about the degree, type, and uses of humor are individual questions whose responses must be specific to the teacher, the setting, the students, and the class subject material.

The following comments are compiled from participants at a brown bag seminar on humor in teaching conducted at the Spirit of Teaching conference, April 8, 2000, at the University of Southern Maine. These comments reflect the views and practices of experienced educators.

1. *What do you see as a benefit of the use of humor in teaching?*
   - Creates community, relaxes students, helps student engagement and retention
   - Relaxes me, provides informal, non-threatening connection to students
   - Engages the students in learning, can emphasize the subject matter
   - Represents a fairly rapid way to reduce stress and fear in the learning process
   - Breaks the ice and helps develop trust
   - Anxiety interferes with learning but humor reduces anxiety
   - Makes learning enjoyable and help kids want to be in class
   - Encourages student participation
   - Makes me real in my students' minds
   - Humor is the doorknob I use to open minds to begin thinking outside the box
   - It is natural because there is humor in life
   - Humor is a form of "intellectual liveliness"—teaches to expect the unexpected

2. *What do you see as the biggest danger in the use of humor?*
   - Humor that excludes a group or individual within the class
   - Sarcasm/putdowns, power—humor can be a powerful weapon
   - Hypersensitive individuals

- Dealing with people who have no experience or judgment in using humor
- Improper reading of classroom climate
- There is truth in humor—people may be saying what they are afraid to say directly
- The possibility of offending someone
- The importance of keeping humor from being harmful
- Derogatory humor
- The teacher could be taken less seriously or be seen as "soft"
- Can obscure or divert the main points of the lesson
- I like the laughs and I need to keep from getting into a "stand-up" routine

3. *What are the biggest challenges in the use of humor?*
   - Dealing with political correctness and appropriateness of humor, interpretation
   - Avoiding offending one's sense of what should be taken seriously
   - Make humor be inclusive not exclusive or "insider-based"
   - Administrators or others may consider it an impediment to learning
   - There may not be much opportunity for humor in a school setting
   - Dealing with non-native speakers
   - Engaging the audience/class
   - Achieving the proper balance
   - Colleagues who misuse humor in front of students
   - Keeping it from becoming personal
   - Humor needs to be used carefully, with the end result in mind
   - Using spontaneous humor from the material rather than planned jokes

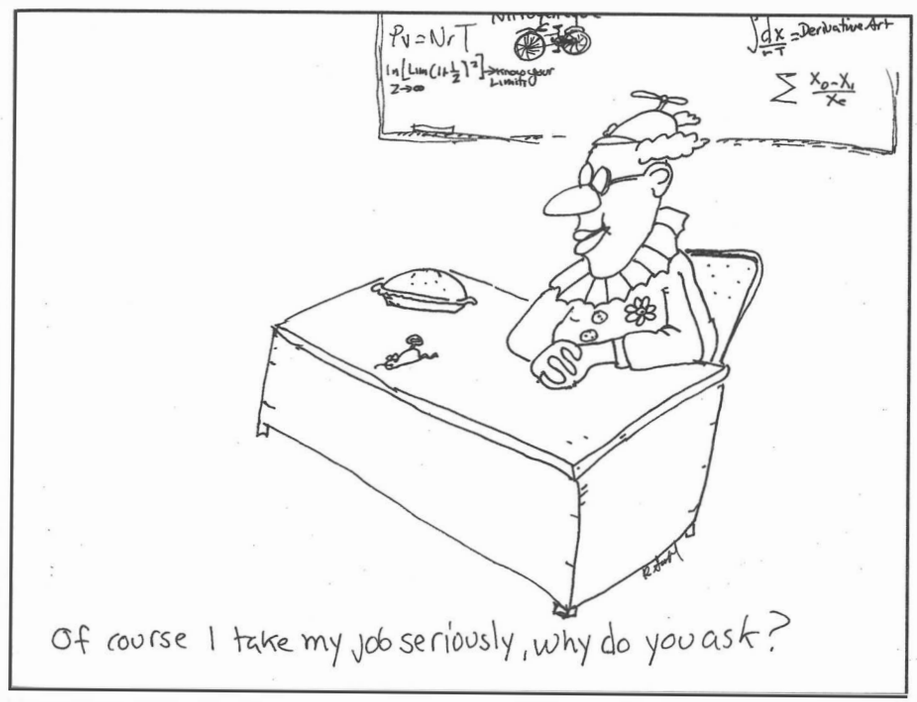
4. *Provide an example where you observed effective use of humor.*
   - The sharing of personal anecdotal stories that might be self-deprecating
   - Generally, cartoons and drawings
   - "I become Prof. Grammaria from the Lōng Island when I begin grammar with my 7th graders. I wear my cap and gown from graduation and a friend's bifocals with a gaudy eyeglass chain."
   - After rapport established with adult learners, one respondent uses exaggerated discipline as a technique in group management
   - Teacher of nursing students responded with this saying "if it's warm and it's wet and it's not yours, wear gloves."
   - English teacher uses humor to explain euphemisms and idioms to making their meanings memorable.
   - Science teacher tells her students that "all jokes are used strictly to chemically alter their bodies to increase individual awareness of a true scientific adventure."

- Robin Williams in *The Dead Poets Society* is an obvious example; Patch Adams is another
- Humorous drawings to accompany work problems
- One respondent explains the struggle of psychology to be a science as "physics envy."
- Respondent's favorite math course had a professor who droned on, dryly interjecting jokes and humorous observations in the midst of his lecture

Materials for Teachers

The grade-school teaching arena abounds with literature on the use of humor and teaching. Kiester's books on grammar (1990, 1993, 1998, 2000) cover from first through twelfth grade. Stress relief is a big factor, hence the title of Lundberg's book, *If They're Laughing They're Not Killing Each Other* (1992). There are many general book-length references for teachers that may also have application for the college level, including Burgess (2000), Goodman (1995), Loomans and Kolberg (1993), Mamchak and Mamchak (1987), Ortman (1996), Hill (1988 and 1993), Shade (1996), and Stopsky (1992). Morreall (1997) and Berk (1998) are particularly appropriate for the college level.

Internet sites may be geared specifically toward education and humor (e.g., Learning Laffs at www.learninglaffs.com/index.htm). Usually, major textbook publishers maintain Web sites with supportive materials and teaching tips. Many of these sites also deal with the use of humor. Subject-specific Web sites also may be sources of teaching tips that involve humor.



In Conclusion

Humor is a vibrant component in effective teaching. If properly used, it acts as a connector, it provides perspective, it stimulates thinking, it reduces stress, and it facilitates learning. The educator can set the boundaries for the use of humor in some form or another. Students in a classroom setting that allows humor benefit from a more open learning process. To have spirit in teaching is to have joy. Joy can start with a little humor.

Acknowledgments

It was my father, a retired professor himself, who correctly observed to me that, as a professor, I was "too weak to work and too nervous to steal." I appreciate the kind advice from Ann Fry, professional humorist, motivational speaker and "Humor University" administrator. I also appreciate the encouragement of Professor Michael Brady in my development of a workshop on humor in teaching and in creating this article.

Robert M. Sanford teaches in the environmental science and policy program at the University of Southern Maine. He lives in Gorham, Maine, with his wife and three children. Anything else you might want to know about him can probably be inferred by reading this chapter.

References

Berk, R. (1998). *Professors are from Mars, Students are from Snickers: How to Write and Deliver Humor in the Classroom and in Professional Presentations*, Madison, WI: Mendota Press.

Boerman-Cornell, W. (2000). "Humor" your students! *The Education Digest* 65(5): 56-61.

Bremmer, J. and H. Roodenburg, (Eds.). Town, ST: Publisher. (1997). *A Cultural History of Humor: From Antiquity to the Present Day,* Cambridge UK: Polity Press.

Burgess, R. (2000). Laughing Lessons: 149$^{2}/_{3}$ Ways to Make Teaching and Learning Fun. Minneapolis MN. Free Spirit.

Darwin, C. (1872). *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, London: John Murray.

Friedman, H., N. Halpern, and D. Salb (1999). *Teaching Statistics Using Humorous Anecdotes*. Mathematics Teacher 92(4): 305-308.

Frymier, A. and M. Wanzer (1998). *Make 'em Laugh and They Will Learn: A Closer Look at the Relationship between Perceptions of Instructor's Humor Orientation and Student Learning.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association (84th, New York, NY, November 19-24, 1998).

Goodman, J. (1995). *Laffirmations: 1001 Ways to Add Humor to Your Life and Work.* Deerfield Beach FL., Health Communications, Inc.

Hawkey, R. (1998). Have You Heard the One about … Science? *School Science Review,* 80(290):29-36.

Heitzmann, W. (1998). The Power of Political Cartoons in Teaching History. Occasional Paper, Westlake, OH: National Council for History Education, Inc.

Hill, D. (1988). *Humor in the Classroom: A Handbook for Teachers and other Entertainers*. Springfield IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Hill, D. (1993). School Days, Fun Days: Creative Ways to Use Humor Skills in the Classroom. *Entertainers*. Springfield Il: Charles C. Thomas.

Kiester, J. (1990). *Caught 'Ya!: Grammar with a Giggle.* Gainesville FL: Maupin House.

Kiester, J. (1993). *Caught 'Ya Again: More Grammar with a Giggle.* Gainsville FL: Maupin House.

Kiester, J. (1998) *The Chortling Board: Caught 'Ya Grammar with a Giggle for High Schools.* Gainsville, FL: Maupin House.

Kiester, J. (2000). *Elementary, My Dear: Caught 'Ya!, Grammar with a Giggle for Grades One, Two, and Three*. Gainsville, FL: Maupin House.

King, J. (1999). Laughter and lesson plans. *Techniques* 74(1): 34-35.

Legman, G. (1982). *No Laughing Matter: An Analysis of Sexual Humor.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Loomans, D. and Kolberg, K. (1993). *The Laughing Classroom: Everyone's Guide to Teaching with Humor and Play.* Tiburon, CA: H. J. Kramer.

Lundberg, E. (1992). *If They're Laughing They're Not Killing Each Other*. Fort Collins, CO: Cottonwood Press.

Mamchak, P. and S. Mamchak (1987). *Encyclopedia of School Humor: Icebreakers, Classics, Stories, Puns & Roasts for All Occasions*. West Nyack, NY: Parker Publishing Company.

McMahon, M. (1999). *Are We Having Fun Yet? Humor in the English Class*. English Journal. 88(4): 70-72.

Morreall, J. (1997). *Humor Works*. Amherst MA: HRD Press.

Nilsen, A. and D. Nilsen (1999). The Straw Man Meets His Match: Six Arguments for Studying Humor in English Classes. *English Journal* 88(4):334-42.

Ortman, M. (1996). *The Teacher's Book of Wit: Quips, Quotes & Anecdotes to Make Learning More Fun*. Wise Owl Books, Kirkland WA.

Paulos, J. (1985). *I Think Therefore I Laugh: An Alternative Approach to Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ryan, K. and J. Kanjorski (1998). The Enjoyment of Sexist Humor, Rape Attitudes, and Relationship Aggression in College Students. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* 38(9-10):743-56.

Shade, R. (1996). *License to Laugh: Humor in the Classroom*. Englewood CO: Teacher Ideas Press.

Steele, K. (1998). *The Positive and Negative Effects of the Use of Humor in the Classroom Setting*. Unpublished master's theses, Salem-Teikyo University, Salem-Teikyo University.

Stopsky, F. (1992). *Humor in the Classroom: A New Approach to Critical Thinking*, Lowell MA: Discovery Enterprises

Teslow, J. (1995). Humor Me: A Call for Research. *Educational Technology Research & Development* 43(3):6-228.

Wanzer, M. and A. Frymier (1999). The Relationship between Student Perceptions of Instructor Humor and Student's Reports ofL Learning. Communication Education 48(1):48-62.

Wilson, V. (1998). *A Study of the Reduction of Anxiety in Graduate Students in an Introductory Educational Research Course*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, November 4-6, 1998).

Ziv, A. (editor) (1988). *National Styles of Humor*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Teaching Notes in the Margins

Mary Collins

15

In Educating the Reflective Practitioner, *Donald Schön wrote that professionals learn to become better at what they do by developing a growing repertoire of effective practices while in the "swamp of practice." This essay is a light-hearted description of how the author learned to teach—if not in the swamp, at least in the field of practice.*

I came to teaching late, by a circuitous route and "uncredentialed." I now find myself in the anomalous position of "non-faculty" in an academic department, in the margins as it were. It is from here that I make these marginal notes on the text of teaching.

After leaving school, if I thought at all about good teaching, and I'm not sure that I ever did, I imagine that I thought of it very traditionally, as something that someone who was an expert in a discipline did, providing quantities of textual material and lectures (the more the better), and with rigorous assessment procedures. In fact, I thought good teaching was what I had experienced; and that good students were just like me.

I began to get a glimpse of a different kind of teaching when I became a staff trainer. I still believed text was all, but the learners came with different kinds of experience and needs depending on the nature of their jobs. Aha, one text does not fit all.

As these learners were also workers, they needed to know not only the what and why of the subject, but also how to apply their learning to their work. Aha, cognitive learning is not all.

You must remember the time of which I write was more than 25 years ago, before Howard Gardiner was identifying multiple intelligences. However, in the staff training arena we were using assessment instruments such as the *Meyers Briggs Personality Test* and the *Kolb Learning Styles Inventory* to understand the different ways that people take in and process information. While these assessments are not necessarily definitive and any of us can learn in any style if need be, they do validate that people have differing preferred learning styles. Surprise, surprise, most people prefer hands-on contextual learning and/or processing information out loud in groups. Aha, most learners are not like me at all; nor do they prefer my teaching style.

Despite these insights, I never became a good staff trainer. I was not able to abandon the (over)use of texts. I was seldom satisfied that I had truly engaged the learners in the learning process. The one shot workshops typical of staff training often do not provide sufficient time to develop the relationships and trust essential to engagement. And, even though I was familiar with the work of Marsick, Senge, Argyris, and others on action learning and other strategies to integrate learning with work, I was not satisfied that the training I was doing was improving most learners' work performance. When these outcomes were achieved, it seemed to be more by chance than by good design and teaching.

It was not until I came to teach full-time in the adult education program that I became a better teacher. I began as a replacement to teach a course while a member of the faculty was on sabbatical and to develop some new courses and attract more students. Because I was not a regular faculty member, I was not expected to perform to all of the same standards as others—I was in the margins. I had the luxury of time, invisibility, and sufficient humility (perhaps) to learn about good teaching from my adult education and other colleagues, from my students, and from experience.

I began to understand that learning involves emotion as well as cognition. In his book, *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer helped me find the words that I had not yet formed. "Intellect works in concert with feeling, so if I hope to open my students' minds, I must open their emotions, as well" (Palmer, 1999, p. 63). It is my experience that emotion precedes cognition, i.e., emotional engagement is a precondition to learning the text. Therefore, in my classes I try first to engage students' feelings. I do this by allowing opportunities for us to get to know each other as people as well as fellow learners, to create a sense of community. I get people engaged, right away, in activities that stimulate interest in each other as well as in the text. I find that if I can get people on their feet, talking and laughing about something of substance, excitement grows and I have them hooked. Good lecturers can create this excitement, as well, because good lectures stir the emotions as well as the intellect. So note number one, not only is emotion crucial to learning, it is the driver of it.

There is a debate in education about teaching the person or teaching the subject. This is not an either/or question, of course; we want to teach the subject to the person. But I have come to see that individualizing fosters learning. Students not only learn differently but they have different strengths and interests. I would assume that this is in part the reason for the success of home schooling, one-room schools, and small classes. Students care that you care about them; it validates who they are. You get to know their strengths and help to develop them, personally and professionally. The people they are becoming is as important as the professional they are becoming. "We learned all we need to know in kindergarten"; kindergarten teachers teach the individual child.

In adult education, because there are fewer standardized learning results and certification requirements, we are able to offer a generalist program that encourages the students to apply the learning in their own area of interest. No two students take the same program or graduate with the same skill and knowledge set. In meeting with a class earlier this week and asking them to reflect on the key themes in adult education, the opportunity to focus their work on their own areas of interest was most important to them. So note number two, individualize the learning as much as possible.

Perhaps the hardest lesson for me to learn was when to use the text and when to abandon it in favor of the experience that all students bring. Students learn a great deal from an examination of their own stories and that of others. In fact, most students, with all due deference to the texts and to the faculty, will say they learned the most from other students. Yet texts (theories) are important. They help us to understand experience, generalize from it and reframe it. I do insist in my classes that it is examined experience that teaches and that text is important. So note number three, provide opportunities for students to tell their stories and to grow from examining them.

If emotions drive learning, why not call forth "light-hearted ones?" I do distinguish between being light-hearted and light-headed or trivial (even though I'm not infrequently accused of the latter by my mathematician brother!). Most students expect the learning emotions to be serious—hard, rigorous, competitive, challenging; many have experienced learning to be deadly, dull, and dreary. Too many others have known only dread and intimidation in formal learning settings. I use the lighter emotions—humor, games, spontaneity, friendly point/counterpoint debates, fun demonstrations, and the like. I remember one student, given the assignment to demonstrate how to do an effective lecture, who used a "Gumby Doll" to lecture on the art of El Greco in Spanish—no one else in the class knew Spanish but we understood her perfectly. Another group of students, at 9:00 p.m. on December 23, had us all laughing helplessly by using a TV quiz show format to teach about hazardous chemicals, a deadly subject and dreary time of year to be in class by any standard. Last semester, a student used potty training as a way to demonstrate how to transfer learning to work. So note number four, while teaching outcomes need to be challenging and rigorous, teaching inputs can be light-hearted.

Teachers are often viewed as performers. I prefer to view them as sometimes authors, coaches, directors and full-time audience; the students are the performers. I come to this conclusion because of a further insight—she who does the most, learns the most. Therefore, we want the students to be doing the most. I try to get myself out of the way of students' learning as much as possible; by this, I mean letting go of my ego, my need to be on stage, my need to be heard. I lecture very little; instead I use advance-organizer questions (something I learned from Mike Brady) to focus students on key issues in the text. In class we do many different kinds of activities—student-led discussions, case studies, debates, and brainstorming. I also frequently use a carousel, affinity, or fishbowl activity, student demonstrations, and field trips to assist us in analyzing the text and applying the material. So note number five, as much as possible let the students perform in order to enhance their learning (you are already "learned"!).

While I use the style of teaching suggested above, these teaching notes can be used as guides whatever your preferred teaching style. For me they are principles to guide practice rather than a formula for good teaching. I'm always interested in learning about guidelines and practices that others use to improve their teaching, so I look forward to you sharing with me.

Perhaps you will ask, by what authority do I write about teaching? I confess, only by the authority of my own experience and by observing and listening to

others, particularly to my students. As I read their final portfolios and comprehensive essays, I am much encouraged that engaged learning produces miraculous results.

Mary Collins is an adjunct associate professor (adult education, Department of Human Resource Development) and a human resource consultant in the University of Southern Maine's College of Education and Human Development. She teaches courses in training and development and self-directed education. Previously, she was staff development director at USM and a research associate at the Muskie School of Public Service. It has taken her two-thirds of a lifetime to learn how to learn and then to teach.

References

Palmer, P. (1998). *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco, Cal: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*. San Francisco, Cal: Jossey-Bass, 1987.

Hunger for Learning Drives Passion for Teaching

Tara Grey Coste

16

The truly satisfying pedagogical experience inspires students to actively search for areas of intellectual awkwardness. Our motivation to teach is sustained and enriched when we successfully guide students toward the development of these discomforting spaces. This article explores how we create the learning experiences that encourage these explorations, how we help students stretch themselves beyond what they thought they could handle and emerge mightily on the other side.

When I think about why I do what I do, the answer can be boiled down to one essential essence. I teach because I have to. There is something inside of me, and I think in the hearts of all who truly love teaching, that compels me to share my lifelong love of learning with others. We teach because we are hungry learners ourselves. We have an insatiable appetite for new, unusual thinking spaces. To us, learning is a joyous celebration of the scary, the unknown, the dissonant places in the mind. Our mission, the fuel that feeds our passion for teaching, is to engage the hunger for learning in others.

I don't think I'll ever forget the moment I realized I was a teacher. Somewhat surprisingly, this did not happen when I began teaching. I had been teaching pretty much my whole life, as a peer tutor in grade school, in more formal tutoring jobs as I got older, as a trainer, as a teaching assistant in graduate school, and then, finally, in classrooms of my own. However, I had never thought of myself as a teacher. That was not what I intended to do with my life. I was a researcher, an editor, a consultant, but never a teacher. In one moment, my focus changed dramatically.

Less than a week after I defended my dissertation, I was talking to a good friend, excitedly sharing my post-doctoral intentions. For a while, he quietly listened to my plans to dive fully into my consulting career, but then he said, "Tara, you're a teacher." I replied that of course I enjoyed teaching, but that a teaching career wouldn't pay off my student loans. I proceeded to tell him of how promising my research results were and the significance of these findings for improving practice in the field. He listened politely, but again interrupted my flow of thought by saying, "But, Tara, you're a teacher." Once again, I brushed off his comment and

told him about the excellent contacts I had made and the organizations that were interested in my work. Sitting on the soft grass of a low hill, soaking in the rich sounds and smells of that beautiful early summer evening, it seemed to me that all was right with the world.

After the long haul of graduate school, the opportunities that lay before me appeared to be just what I had worked so hard to achieve. However, after hearing me out, my friend said to me, "What you're describing sounds pretty exciting, but think about what you truly love to do. Think about what's most fulfilling for you." For once, I was quiet. Initially, I was a bit frustrated that he didn't seem to see my life plan as logically as I did. Then, all of a sudden, I heard what he had been so patiently saying. In that moment, I realized that I was a teacher.

To me, teaching at its core is about engaging others in the great adventure of learning. The truly satisfying teaching experience inspires students to actively seek out areas of weakness, to intentionally place themselves in the way of intellectual discomfort. As Gregory (1997) states:

> Intellectuality includes...judiciousness, an avoidance of cant, a realization that first impressions are seldom authoritative, a sense that the easy answers may be too easy, a pleasure in the process of learning for [its] own sake, a hatred of dogmatism, and a sensitive nose for the smell of rotten evidence. And it means most, perhaps, the generosity to admit that, sometimes, the very arguments and positions that we dislike the most either hold at least half the truth that we would like to claim exclusively, or, worse, that the objectionable positions hold half of the truth that our position is somehow too feeble to contain (p. 2).

It is in the quest to develop a learning environment comfortable enough to encourage such intellectual risk taking and the search for tools to guide a diversity of students toward effectively articulating their ideas that we perpetuate the call that challenges us to share our hunger for learning with others.

In my experience, students may be roughly categorized into three levels of intellectual hunger: those who are inspired, those who have been damaged, and those who are merely doing their time. The inspired learners come to the classroom already motivated and hungry. They bring a positive charge to the educational environment and often act as a catalyst in the exploration of knowledge. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the damaged learners. Something in their academic history makes them enter the classroom hostilely, with low confidence in their intellectual abilities. They bring a negative charge to the environment and are the teacher's special challenge. In between these two extremes are the vast majority of students, those I describe as doing time. The doing-time learners are clearly competent, but they are unenthusiastic about the class. Although they don't notably detract from the educational environment (being neutrally charged), they could clearly be more engaged. The trick is to engage the hunger for learning along the entire spectrum of student motivation.

Unfortunately, no instrument has yet been developed that can accurately predict what pedagogical techniques will be most effective for the diversity of learn-

ers present in our classrooms (Burns, Johnson, & Gable, 1998). However, recent studies of knowledge acquisition and learning indicate that the complexity of the learning environment may very well impact the long-term benefits of an educational experience. Under conditions that make it easy to learn new information from the start, students showed poorer retention than those in more complex learning environments. Not surprisingly, in more complex environments, students may be compelled to do more than simply acquire information about specific concepts covered; they may have to learn about learning itself (Schroth, 1997).

These findings meld nicely with current trends in education. From a rejection of the traditional knowledge transfer model of classrooms and a greater emphasis on the scholarship and practice of teaching comes a much more student-centered conceptualization of education that places student learning in the forefront (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Hutchins & Schulman, 1999; O'Leary, 1997). The character and depth of student learning and the conditions under which meaningful learning occurs are becoming of paramount importance (Hutchins & Schulman, 1999). A key element of this focus is creating an environment in which students are taught how to learn. We are challenged to help students gain the patience and intellectual subtlety to think about ideas rather than facts, to realize the difference between searching for knowledge and having an answer (Gregory, 1997). In this new frame, the emphasis of the experience is shifted from acquiring information about things and events to an exploration of relationships, patterns, and interconnectedness (Chia, 1996).

MacLeod (1997) argues that if educators are committed to sharing a sense of wonder in the life-long learning experience, they must expose students to situations whose meanings cannot be easily ascertained. Students must learn that a robust educational exploration requires releasing their thinking to ambiguity and confusion so that a deeper learning can be achieved. Although this will likely cause some discomfort, especially in those who do not come to the classroom with a natural inclination to seek out areas of intellectual awkwardness, the experience can be used to help all types of learners become engaged in the learning experience. When students know there is no one correct answer, multiple opportunities for learning and learning to learn emerge and can be accommodated. In this spirit, the educational exploration becomes a celebration of togetherness, of trust, caring, and engagement, in which the on-going exchange of different perspectives is recognized as important rather than the absorption of a singular truth (Montuori, 1997).

With this sense of community, there comes a greater security to explore the complex, and at times conflicting, information encountered in any robust intellectual investigation. Students learn that it is not only acceptable, but desirable that they seek out the spaces in knowledge where uncertainty and disagreement exist and persist (Chia, 1996). Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2000) contend that unless educators create an experience of intellectual conflict, students will not truly engage with course material. Unfortunately, this may be difficult to achieve in a society that encourages expectations of instant gratification. Few students are initially at ease with prolonged states of inquiry (Gregory, 1997). However, if we manage to build educational environments that encourage tolerance for the unknown and risk-taking and that foster development of self-esteem and perseverance, students can acquire the intellectual tools they need for bold explorations of

ideas (Gallagher, 1994).

Clearly, an environment in which students are encouraged to discover and construct meaning for themselves is far removed from the image of teaching as a mere transfer of knowledge. The core foundation of the interactive educational environment is the importance of developing a passion for the process of learning itself. Students are guided toward an understanding of knowledge as dynamic and socially constructed, of knowledge framed as the interaction of a variety of perspectives that only becomes useful when they can apply it meaningfully for themselves. When education becomes internalized as a continual and exciting adventure into the unknown, students are able to take ownership and responsibility for their learning as a life-long engagement.

The great challenge of teaching is to develop an intellectual partnership that is collaborative and supportive, yet, at the same time, challenges students to intentionally seek the hungry places in their minds. When we see that hunger awaken and are able to guide the development of learning strategies to address this hunger, we know that we have made a difference. Nevertheless, when I find myself grading papers at a time no sensible human being should still be awake, I sometimes ask myself why it is I continue to do what I do. Life would be much less exhausting had I followed my original plan. The answer that comes to me is always the same. As my friend so unrelentingly pointed out to me that summer night years ago, I am a teacher. When I successfully create a learning community that encourages deep intellectual explorations, when I see students stretch themselves beyond what they thought they could handle and emerge mightily on the other side, these are the spaces from which my motivation is fed.

Tara Grey Coste, Ph.D. is a leadership and organizational studies professor at the Lewiston-Auburn campus of the University of Southern Maine. She applies interests in creativity, group dynamics, and technology to three pedagogical lines of inquiry: examining optimal uses of educational technology, incorporating service learning into courses effectively, and infusing creativity principles into the learning experience. Professor Coste dedicates this chapter to Moe Stein, her "most wise teacher and good friend."

References

Barr, R., and Tagg, J. (1995). From teaching to learning: A new paradigm for undergraduate education. *Change, 27* (6), 12-25.

Burns, D., Johnson, S., & Gable, R. (1998). Can we generalize about the learning style characteristics of high academic achievers? *Roeper Review, 20* (4), 276-281.

Chia, R. (1996). Teaching paradigm shifting in management education: University business schools and the entrepreneurial imagination. *Journal of Management Studies, 33* (4), 409-428.

Gallagher, J. (1994). Teaching and learning: New models. *Annual Review of Psychology, 45*, 171-195.

Gregory, M. (1997). Introductory courses, student ethos, and living the life of the mind. *College Teaching, 45* (2), 63-71.

Hutchins, P., & Shulman, L. (1999). The scholarship of teaching: New elaborations, new developments. *Change, 31* (5), 11-15.

Johnson, D., Johnson, R., and Smith, K. (2000). Constructive controversy: The educative power of intellectual conflict. *Change, 32* (1), 29-37.

MacLeod, A. (1997). Telling tales of transformation. *ReVision, 20* (1), 41-44.

Montuori, A. (1997). Social creativity, academic discourse, and the improvisation of inquiry. *ReVision, 20* (1), 34-37.

O'Leary, R. (1997). The great man theory of teaching is dead. *Journal of Public Administration Education, 3* (2), 127-133.

Schroth, M. (1997). The effects of different training conditions on transfer in concept formation. *The Journal of General Psychology, 124* (2), 157-165.

Teacher as Trickster, Teacher as Mirror: Student-Centered Classroom Dynamics and the Spirit of Teaching

Eve Allegra Raimon and Rose Cleary

17

If, as Paulo Freire suggests, true communication between teachers and students is indispensable to the process of education, then whatever makes each dialogue difficult warrants careful attention. Using psychoanalytic insights, this essay explores the problematic play of authority and resistance within student-centered classrooms and sees that interplay as necessary to the process of transformative education. It argues that a certain kind of pedagogical transference involving both identification and resistance is often necessary and productive.

Student-centered teaching is tricky business. It is the practice of teachers engaging in dialogue with students in a shared process of inquiry. This approach strips from teachers the mask of the expert who simply transmits neutral information, and it disallows students the posture of passive recipients of bits of information and fixed systems of knowledge. In a seemingly paradoxical way, student-centered teaching finds its vitalizing center in the questions, curiosities, aims, and explorations of the teacher-as-student and student-who-teaches. The trick here, however, is that our classrooms are precisely inscribed cultural sites profoundly influenced by historical, political, and economic factors and expectations. Thus, to strive for a non-hierarchical and participatory approach to teaching/learning while being simultaneously invested with professorial authority and responsibilities leads to certain enlivening contradictions and necessary tensions. In this paper, we explore these tensions and contradictions by considering the relational dynamics in student-centered classrooms. We first consider the question of the liberatory aims of student-centered teaching and attempt to locate the desire animating such teaching/learning. We then take up a particularly problematic way in which we sometimes experience the interplay of desire and power in teacher-student relationships. Specifically, we consider what we as teachers reflect back to students especially insofar as they see in us an image of their own fears and aspira-

tions. Such reflections sometimes generate profoundly ambivalent—yet no less essential—student responses.

Deceits and Desires: Transformations in the Classroom

While research clearly shows that the quality of students' active, participatory interactions with faculty and other students is the "single most important determinant in college outcomes" (Davis & Murrell, 1993, p. *v*), such measures of success do not fully explain why so many of us have embraced student-centered pedagogy. As important is the fact that this approach enacts the spirited commitment of progressivist and feminist pedagogues who agree with Paulo Freire's conviction that education is never a neutral process: it either indoctrinates students into the logic of the present system or liberates them into a practice of freedom (Freire, 1973). Believing in the emancipatory powers of education, progressivists have sought ways to create classroom experiences that do not recreate relationships of control and domination, but instead empower students to find their own voice so that they are able to inquire, critically analyze, and actively participate in challenging oppressive ideologies and unjust structures of power. For those of us who embrace such liberatory aims, teaching is much more than simply assisting students in the cognitive mastery of knowledge content. We seek nothing less than individual and cultural transformation.

Yet, as educators committed to "interrupting the dehumanizing forces of oppression" (Lather, 1992), how is it that we decide *for* our students that they need to be rescued from what we consider subjugation? In this activity of deciding *for*, how can we simultaneously hold the rather contradictory belief that our teaching functions to empower and liberate? Acknowledging this seeming contradiction, Elizabeth Ellsworth comments that "strategies of student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact" (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 98). Progressivist pedagogues must acknowledge the profound paradox sustained by our dedication to dismantling systems of oppression while engaging in "the essentially paternalistic project of traditional education" (p. 99). We would argue, in fact, that all teaching that is informed by and committed to a meaningful liberal arts education involves a deception, a bait-and-switch maneuver: students "sign up" for one thing (a core requirement or even a more "subversive" course in, say, women's studies) believing they will acquire a certain degree of mastery, attain certain insights, a quantity of knowledge, perhaps some higher-order thinking skills, but most certainly they will be given credit for completing a course of study. However, students rarely sign up for or give informed consent to being subjected to a process whose real intent is individual and cultural transformation. In this connection, Deborah S. Wilson poses the provocative question, "Whose liberation do we truly seek to affect—our students or our own" (1996, p. 48). More fundamentally, we might also ask whose desire for transformation animates the shared inquiries in our classrooms?

Acknowledging the contradiction that we work from a position of authority when we set an emancipatory agenda for our student-centered classes exposes a significant source of tension in our teaching. At the same time, we must also consider a related, yet still more foundational paradox of liberatory education. This paradox runs through the traditions of Western liberal arts education. We hear of it first in Plato's allegory of the cave when he envisions education as beginning

with a *compulsion* to break out of the shackles that keep the subject in darkness—that state in which he is passively indoctrinated into particular perceptions, habits of mind, and unexamined assumptions. Plato conceives of education as a process of being led out of this darkness into a state of active and enlightened engagement of one's own powers of perception and critical inquiry. He describes this process as painful and disorienting. Quite significantly, the allegory then compares education to being *forcibly dragged* up a steep ascent from darkness into the light of day. This shift warrants careful attention. Education begins, according to this tale, in an individual feeling compelled to break out of captivity and yet it then becomes an experience of being forcibly moved. Both moments suggest the force of necessity—in the first, we hear of a *compulsion* to realize one's freedom to know—what Plato and other traditional western pedagogues have described as the desire for knowledge. Yet the second moment of being *forcibly dragged* suggests that an opposing force of resistance to movement has emerged. This is what the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan will later refer to as a "passion for ignorance," the desire to remain in the dark and to ignore how one is implicated by the insights gained through inquiry. In this Socratic tale of education as a process of liberatory conversion, teaching is described as the "art of the speediest and most effective shifting or conversion of the soul" (*Republic, VII*, 518). It is also envisioned as a struggle with this passion for ignorance. "Teaching," writes the Lacanian scholar Shoshana Felman, "has to deal not so much with *lack* of knowledge as with *resistances* to knowledge" (1982, p. 30). This resistance is neither simple apathy nor resignation. As we have seen, it is rather a reactive response emerging precisely within transformative educational moments. Later we will consider one way in which the tension created by this play of desire and resistance becomes manifest in student-teacher interpersonal dynamics.

Meanwhile, a postmodernist version of this Platonic tale might translate the allegory of the cave into poststructuralist parlance and say that what is being described is a shift in one's position in relation to dominant cultural discourses, narratives, and practices. We might see this conversion as a shift in sensibility, an initiation by which one comes to embrace one's active role in the makings of culture, its knowledge and practices. In this understanding, education is understood as the experience through which one is forcibly dragged into the empowered activity of participating in the production of the meanings, knowledge and practices that shape the cultural world.

Framed thus, how might we understand the force of resistance to this empowerment? From whence comes the "passion for ignorance?" Laurie Finke writes that she embraces a politicized psychoanalytic framework in her consideration of pedagogy because she finds in it a way to conceptualize how authority functions in her feminist pedagogical practice. Such a framework also recognizes the complex interrelationship between the individual and the social, the psyche, and the political. The psyche of the individual, writes Finke, "must be construed as a social and ideological process, constituted by and within language and culture and not some kind of private interiority"(1993, p.12). This poststructuralist way of thinking encourages teachers to realize that when we invite students to interrupt historical systems of oppression by critically examining elements of our cultural assumptions and ideologies, we are also putting into question the beliefs and assumptions by which individual lives are in the process of being organized (Lather, 1992, p. 121).

Therefore, our pedagogical attempts at cultural intervention and transformation necessarily involve psychological disruptions and transformations in ourselves and our students.

Dialogue, as Freire reminds us, is indispensable to this process. Rather than describing the desire to know as a compulsion belonging to the individual, Freire argues that such desire emerges only within a context of true communication between teacher-as-student and student-who-teaches. The teacher is taught in dialogue with the students, and while being taught, also teaches (Freire, 1973). A strikingly convergent insight is offered by Shoshana Felman who argues that for Lacan, "knowledge is not a substance but a structural dynamic: it is not contained by any individual but comes about out of a mutual apprenticeship... Dialogue is thus the radical condition of learning and of knowledge" (1982, p. 33). From this perspective, the authoritative structure of pedagogy must be understood in the context of such dialogue. "The teacher cannot be alone, a master of knowledge," Lacan writes (quoted in Felman, 1992, p. 33). S/he is rather the one responsible for maintaining the dialogue through which the desire to know emerges. Such dialogue encourages the deepening consciousness of one's situation that spurs critical inquiry. The teacher is also responsible for struggling with, and learning from, the resistances to such insight.

What follows can be seen as a kind of theoretical case study of pedagogical resistance as it applies both to the student, enacted in the form of psychoanalytical transference, *and* to the teacher, in the form of that teacher's own resistance and eventual acceptance of the explanatory power of the theory of transference itself. The purpose here is to describe and analyze the ambivalent psychological relationship we have as teachers in connection with the position described by Lacan as "the subject presumed to know." To do so, we now turn from the academic propriety of the third-person voice to the perhaps more urgent, yet also more vulnerable first-person point of view (E.A.R.s). Finally, the narrative will posit an inevitable and even necessary role for the process of a certain brand of pedagogical transference in arriving at the preconditions requisite for meaningful dialogue and mutual apprenticeship between students and teachers.

The Couch Meets the Desk: Psychoanalytic Structures in the Student-Centered Classroom

As an English professor whose own scholarship is based in nineteenth-century American literary history, I confess to having been resistant to psychoanalysis, both as a mode of cultural analysis and as it pertains to the scene of the classroom. Perhaps out of avoidance, I rebelled—like many others—against the universalizing and a historical aspects of that interpretive approach. However, a pattern among certain students' interactions with me has become so apparent—and disconcerting—in the last several years as to lead me to seek an explanation in the realm of the psyche. Thus far, I have understood this pattern as one of an initial idealization on the part of some students succeeded by an eventual de-idealization, an extreme identification followed by an inevitable dis-identification. What I want to investigate here is whether a more explicit psychoanalytic discourse might prove still more productive in my attempt to respond to this dynamic in such a way as to maximize its productive potential for students' ongoing efforts to fashion a new interpretive voice, to produce meaning rather than merely to repeat language, in Robert Con Davis' terms (1990, p. 752). If I am to be honest, however, I also want

to delve into the psychoanalytic component of this dynamic so that I can acquire greater insight—if not control—over it as a teacher interested in fostering a sense of equanimity in her dealings with her students. The volatility associated with such psychic oscillations threatens the desired predictability of student-teacher relations.

According to Laurie Finke, "All pedagogy—including feminist pedagogy—is driven by a psychic interplay of desire and power among teachers and students" (1992, p. 8). I take this assertion to be centrally concerned with the notion that students ascribe to their teachers, by virtue of their position of authority alone, certain properties, abilities, and advantages they themselves are struggling to acquire. Teachers, in turn, are continuously placed in the position of resisting and/or exercising that imputed power, which, by definition, comprises elements of both the real and the imaginary. More provocative still is Lacan's formulation that, "As soon as there is a subject presumed to know, there is transference" (quoted in Felman, 1992, p. 35). Lacan suggests that the teacher—the subject presumed to know—in some way also stands in for the primal figure, no matter how attenuated, contingent, or subterranean the association.

I contend that for a number of reasons institutions like the University of Southern Maine, and Lewiston-Auburn College in particular, are prime locales for the visible enactment of these psychic dramas. Precisely because so many of our students are adult women they are more likely to experience both close identification with female professors and the countervailing impulse to resist the unavoidable position of subjugation, of constraint; the feminist classroom populated by students around the same age as the teacher thus becomes an especially charged site of psychological contestation. To be sure, the intensity associated with this dynamic only enacts itself dramatically with a minority of students. The occasion when I experienced it first also stands as the most spectacular example. Several years ago I was asked to be part of a discussion at a Portland Museum of Art event to discuss "The Watermelon Woman," a faux documentary ostensibly recovering the history of an early film actress whose career was spent playing "Mammy" roles. My presence as the only white woman on the panel offended certain members of the audience, who proceeded to challenge both my comments and my right to make them. I saw little to be gained by fueling a confrontation and instead took a conciliatory approach in response.

Earlier, I had seen two of what I then simply thought of as "my best" students in the audience, but I failed to anticipate their reaction to the events they witnessed. These students were recent graduates who had heretofore been effusive in their praise of the classes they had taken with me. However, rather than identifying with my predicament and interpreting the audience response as an exercise in racial essentialism—as my co-panelists and I had done—they directed their frustration at me in e-mail messages full of resentment and vitriol. While such rancor did not last, it seems appropriate to think of the experience in terms of a moment of strong negative transference. My inability somehow to prevent or transform the awkwardness of the scene in the museum was deeply disappointing and frustrating to my students. They had been witness to a display of my powerlessness and they were outraged by it. In their minds, I later realized, I had failed to embody the spirit of progressive activism we had studied in class.

I offer this anecdote to show a sensational version of what is usually a more

modulated, more gradual pattern I have now come to expect with certain women students—usually those who at the outset are the most excited, most motivated students I encounter. In this pattern, students move during their academic careers from a position of marked identification and introjection in early phases to varying degrees and modes of resistance, rebellion, and in some cases seeming hostility later on. The latter phase might take the humorous and innocuous form of arranging classroom chairs not in a conventional circle, as I have made clear is my preference—but instead with the chairs facing outward like spokes on a wheel, thereby making conversation impossible. Or the resistance might take on a more vexing aspect, such as a student's sudden attitude of withdrawal in class or a generally contrary demeanor. Finke writes that pedagogical transference "inevitably involves power, inevitably creates a relationship of imagined mastery and simultaneous identification with and resistance toward that mastery" (1993, p. 18). Ironically, having always been repelled by the dynamics of academic hero worship, I now find such discussions of the operations of power and mastery in the classroom indispensable to the project of furthering the conditions necessary for meaningful student learning. If the psychic interplay of desire and power among teachers and students is unavoidable and ever-present, we need to do a better job at integrating this dynamic into our conceptions of effective pedagogy.

Still, I am so uncomfortable with occupying the position of mastery, of being the "subject presumed to know" in the psychoanalytic sense, that in my interactions with one new student I recently experimented with trying to thwart or interrupt the transference process. For example, when this student e-mailed me making a self-conscious reference to feelings of hero worship, I answered back: "I have learned to be wary of hero worship—from both sides of the coin. It can be productive, but it will also inevitably be disappointing." This strategy had an interesting result: I was concerned at first that my intervention would dampen her academic enthusiasm. However, it seemed only to redirect her effusiveness away from me and toward her classmates and the experience of the class generally. In a later communication she exclaims, "I just can't help it—this is the best, best class... I am so glad I decided to take this class this semester because the other folks in class are amazing. But is it all down hill from here?"

Clearly, this is an unusually exuberant and motivated student who resisted the efforts even of the subject presumed to know to restrain her intensity of feeling, her desire for knowledge, and by that I do not mean mastery over a fixed body of information but rather the ability to fashion a subject position that enables her to produce meaning within the forms of articulation embedded within a given discipline or discourse. This process of pedagogical transference—in both its modes of identification and resistance—is productive and necessary, at least for some students, in transforming the locus of mastery from the subject presumed to know to the student herself. The relationship allows the student to locate her developing desire for this learned kind of voice within the person of the teacher even as she works to take possession of it herself. It is by definition a messy, erratic, unstable proposition for both student and teacher because it entails nothing less than the transformation of consciousness. As discussed earlier, students must come to see themselves as literally someone other than they initially took themselves to be as they learn to position themselves in a new way in relation to larger systems of ideology and culture.

For progressive-minded educators who are able to acknowledge and make room for these transferential dynamics, this complex interplay of desire and resistance, rather than holding out hope for an illusory classroom where power relations somehow evaporate, a genuine spirit of student-centered pedagogy is, perhaps paradoxically, more likely to be served. Working with instead of against this process, whose objective is establishing the conditions necessary for transformative dialogue and mutual apprenticeship to flourish, results in precisely the kind of spirited teaching that is most profoundly satisfying for all concerned.

Eve Allegra Raimon is an assistant professor in the arts and humanities program at the University of Southern Maine, Lewiston-Auburn College. She has published articles about teaching race in an interdisciplinary context, adult students and service learning, and the history of U.S. miscegenation. She is revising a book manuscript on the subject of nationalism and the "tragic mulatto" in 19th-century antislavery fiction.

Rose Cleary is an assistant professor in the social and behavioral sciences program at the University of Southern Maine, Lewiston-Auburn College. Her research and writing interests include feminism and psychoanalysis, critical psychology, and lesbian mothering. She has published and presented feminist and historical critiques of attachment theory and developmental models of psychopathology.

References

Davis, R. C., (1990). A manifesto for oppositional pedagogy: Freire, Bourdieu, Merod, and Graff. In Bruce Henrickson and Thais E. Morgan (Eds.), *Reorientations: Critical Theories and Pedagogies* (pp. 248-267). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Davis, T. & Murrell, P. (1993). Turning teaching into learning: The role of student responsibility in the collegiate experience. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 8, iii-vi.*

Ellsworth, E. (1992). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. In C. Luke & J. Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* (pp. 90-119). New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.

Felman, S. (1982). Psychoanalysis and education: Teaching terminable and interminable. *Yale French Studies, 63,* 21-44.

Finke, L. (1993). Knowledge as bait: Feminism, voice, and the pedagogical unconscious. *College English, 55,* 7-27.

Freire, P. (1973). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Seabury Press

Lather, P. (1992). Post-critical pedagogies: A feminist reading. In C. Luke & J. Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* (pp. 120-137). New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.

Plato, (1961). The Republic. In E. Hamilton & H. Cairns (Eds.), P. Shorey (Translator), *Plato: The collected dialogues.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Wilson, D. (1996). Dora, Nora and their professor: The "talking cure," *Nightwood,* and feminist pedagogy. *Literature and Psychology, 42,* 48-71.

Where Passion Resides: An Occupational Performance Analysis of Teaching

Roxie Black and Nancy MacRae

18

How does one find passion or spirit in the occupation of teaching? The authors provide a strategy to better define the elusive concept of passion or spirit as it relates to teaching. They employ an occupational theory perspective and analyze the practice of teaching using an occupational performance context. The transaction among the person, environment, and occupation—the three components of the theory—is found to be the source of meaning, the place where passion is fueled, and spirit is discovered and claimed.

Introduction

Ten years ago the authors of this paper were students and advisees of Michael Brady. At the time, Nancy was the director of the Occupational Therapy (OT) Department at Pineland Center, and Roxie was a faculty member in the OT Department at the University of New England (UNE). When we graduated in 1989 from the adult education master's program at the University of Southern Maine (USM), the phrase that reverberated for each of us was Michael's exhortation, "Follow your passion!" Those words have become a guiding principle for each of us. Nancy sought and gained a faculty position at University of New England within months of graduation; Roxie became the assistant chair of the department, and subsequently matriculated at Lesley College in the Ph.D. program in educational studies.

Eleven years later, that continued passion has led both Roxie and Nancy to directorships of occupational therapy education programs; Nancy at UNE and Roxie here at USM. The passion for teaching has evolved into one where both continue to teach and to model and nurture the process for others.

There are numerous ways to examine the passion for and spirit of teaching—as the multiple essays in this book attest. Being pragmatists by nature and profession, we decided to explore the theoretical underpinnings in the field of occupational therapy to try to determine where one finds the spirit or meaning in the occupation of teaching. We wanted to determine where the passion for teaching resides.

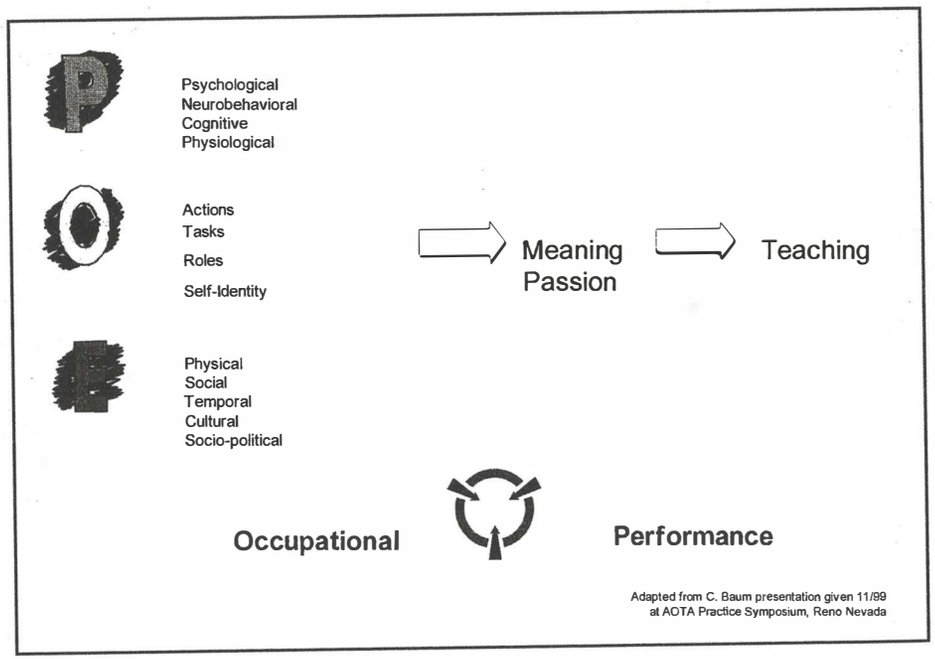
Occupation Defined

Humans are occupational beings. We find and make meaning in the things we do, the activities in which we engage. And these activities or occupations determine and are determined by our sociocultural roles. Hence, our occupations define us. Our identity is inexorably intertwined with what we do. Occupational therapy (OT) is a practice profession that uses meaningful occupation in a therapeutic process to help improve a client's ability to function and find meaning in their lives.

Occupation has been defined in multiple ways in the occupational therapy literature. A clear and simple definition is offered by Schkade & Schultz (1992) as:

> "Activities characterized by three properties—active participation, meaning to the person, and a product that is the output of a process" (p. 829).

Theoretically, occupation has been divided into three performance areas: work, play/leisure, and self-help. Teaching would generally fall into the area of work, although for some of us, the joy and satisfaction we gain from our chosen field makes it sometimes feel more like play. In order to analyze teaching as an occupation, and how an individual finds meaning in that occupation, we employed a practice model used in the field of OT.



One of a number of current models that focuses on occupational performance is the Performance, Environment, Occupation (PEO) Model. The PEO model was developed by Christiansen and Baum (1997) to emphasize a view of occupational performance as an interaction between an individual and the environment.

Specifically, it is the transactional process between the person, his/her social and physical environment, and occupation. This model was based on general systems, environmental, neurobehavioral, and psychological theories and addresses society's occupational performance needs. Occupational performance is the result of the transaction between the three components of this model. It is dynamic and requires active involvement, with the expected outcomes competence and the development of skills.

In order to address occupational performance and to influence the successful performance of learners, the "p" in this equation, one needs to know the following: what that individual does in daily life, what motivates her, and how the person's characteristics combine with the situation in which the occupations are undertaken. Students are engaged in the pursuit of knowledge because of a need. However they may describe that need, they have made a choice to devote time, money, and energy to learn about that which is often a passion for them. Students' occupation at this point is to study. Their occupational performance needs are for learning and the ability to appropriately apply it in relevant environments.

Teachers are the enablers or facilitators (Christiansen and Baum, 1997, p. 62) to help students acquire the skills necessary for the performance of tasks and roles that the learner wishes to fulfill. If educators know the developmental status of their students, they can connect with them on various appropriate levels. Learning about them as individuals will better allow educators to fashion a learning situation that will resonate with them. Additionally, understanding the needs of the learner will help educators develop strategies to better allow them to assimilate the information presented. Finally, understanding the environment in which they will function, with its political and social vagaries and the business orientation of managed care, will help us to better prepare the student to be able to effectively practice and/or to be better citizens.

Taking into account each of the three components of this model provides teachers with a holistic picture of students. However, there is something that transpires when all three areas have been directly addressed and when what is being taught connects with the learner. The resulting transaction ideally creates that "just right" challenge, takes advantage of that teachable moment, creates that recognition of an insight, that "a-ha" experience. Not only has the student gained insight but the teacher has been rewarded for aligning all the components at the same time. It is truly a win/win situation, one where both are ready to enthusiastically continue the journey of discovery. The learners want to apply what they have learned to see whether it will work.

This juncture is not reached magically, although elements of a magical moment do exist. Preliminary work based on learned theory and methodologies and a student-centered approach are prerequisites. A plethora of personality characteristics of the teacher, such as charisma, empathy, patience, quiet strength, confidence, high expectations, a sense of humor may add immeasurably to the mix. Some teachers appear to be born to the role, while others need training; yet each is capable of reaching this culminating point if the transactional process is on target. It is a self-fulfilling trait: the student yearns for more such moments; the teacher strives to create such discoveries.

A Walk Through the Model

In order to further clarify the model and its use, we will use one of the authors,

Roxie Black, as a case study. We will explain the process in some detail in order to provide an example so that you each may use this approach to evaluate yourself. By shifting the focus somewhat so that the person (the "p") in the model is the teacher rather than the student, the meaning in the interaction changes. As we look at the "p" section on the diagram, which is the *person* who is engaged in the activity, there are various components to examine.

Psychologically Roxie is at a place in her life where she is confident, settled, aware of her strengths and challenges, and quite happy with who she is and the roles that help to identify her. She believes that life is good. She is very aware of Ericson's developmental stages and believes herself to be in the stage of generativity, a place of giving to and sharing wisdom with others. She receives a lot of satisfaction out of teaching and mentoring students.

Neurobehaviorally Many of her senses are beginning to diminish somewhat, as a natural part of the aging process. She needs her glasses or contact lenses to do the reading she delights in, her hearing is diminishing a little more each year, her reaction times are slower, and she doesn't have quite as much endurance and stamina as she enjoyed twenty years ago. However, she has compensated for these mild changes, and none of them seem to interfere with her teaching significantly.

Cognitively Roxie is flourishing. She is reveling in the new knowledge she is gaining as part of her own graduate study, and excitedly shares this with friends, colleagues, and students. Because of her knowledge and experience, she is integrating new concepts with old, and developing new ideas from that combination. Did I mention that her short-term memory is sometimes a problem, and her word-finding problem is exacerbated with fatigue?

Physiologically She is generally well. She does take medicine to decrease her cholesterol level, and sporadically watches her diet in order not to gain more weight, and of course, menopause is an issue. But she is taking these things in stride, and is increasing her exercise program in order to maintain her health and the stamina necessary for teaching in and administering a graduate program.

In summary, middle-age, and being in her early fifties in particular, is a wonderful time of life for Roxie. She feels good physically, mentally and emotionally, and has a great zest for life which she shares with her students and colleagues. She believes she is a good role model for her students. Because of longevity in her family (a great-grandmother who lived to a healthy 104, and a grandfather who died at 96), Roxie is looking forward to actively enjoying several more healthy decades.

The *environment* component of the model includes the physical, social, temporal, cultural, and sociopolitical world that encompasses the person and either supports or stresses the activities in which a person engages. Roxie's working environment at Lewiston-Auburn College (LAC) fully supports her teaching activities. The *physical* space is bright, clean, open, and inviting, with colleagues who are supportive, knowledgeable, constructively critical, and fun.

Socially there is a climate of collaboration and community that surpasses any place else she has worked. People at LAC are interested in her work, share pedagogical strategies, discuss one another's scholarship, and are concerned about the students. Faculty are excited about teaching and sharing ideas. The focus on students is evident in the mission of student-centered teaching and interdisciplinarity. The students in her program are a delight to teach. They are challenging and

talented adults who are eager to learn, have experiences to share, and are hungry for knowledge. They greatly contribute to her joy in teaching.

The *temporal* aspects include Roxie's own developmental level and life stage which was discussed above, as well as the time when activities occur within the culture. The graduate program in OT at LAC offers most of its courses during the days, in blocks of two to five hours of class depending on the course. This schedule generally works for Roxie, allowing time to administer the program and work on her graduate degree. There is never enough time to complete all the needs to be done, but that might be due more to Roxie's interest in multiple tasks, rather than the actual temporal structure of her day or week.

The *sociopolitical culture* of Roxie's life at LAC adds interest and excitement. She is surrounded by people with diverse ages, sexuality, socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, and genders. There is some, but limited, racial and ethnic diversity. As the director of the master's in OT program she is influenced by (and has some, but minimal influence on) the accrediting agency of her profession, the climate and culture of her college and its stance in the larger university, the expectations of her dean, faculty, and students. Her feminist and multicultural beliefs are encouraged in this environment and can flourish. In summary, Roxie's work environment also supports her excitement for teaching and learning.

When examining the final circle in the model that depicts *occupation*, and how it interacts with what we have just discussed, we must examine the task of teaching, considering the actions, tasks, roles, and self-identity inherent in it. Roxie has taught at the college level for sixteen years. Over those years she has learned the importance of establishing a climate of safety in the classroom, where each voice is valued and heard. She teaches in an interactive, student-centered manner, believing that students come to the classroom already having knowledge, and will construct their own meaning from information presented based on their previous experiences and knowledge. She ascribes to the tenet outlined by Ira Shor (1992) that education can be empowering. She has high expectations for and expects rigorous work from her students; nevertheless, her classrooms are active, challenging (for both her and the students) and fun. The mission of her college supports the way Roxie teaches.

Because of her beliefs, Roxie sees her role as a facilitator and co-learner in the classroom, rather than as the specialist with all the knowledge. She is comfortable and confident in this role, and achieves great satisfaction from it. She recognizes herself to be a better than average teacher, and some of the greatest joy she receives from her job occurs in the classroom.

As was said earlier, it is the *transaction* among these three components, the person, the environment, and the occupation, that give meaning to the occupation of teaching. The interaction between Roxie, who she is and what she brings to teaching, the environment where she engages in teaching, and the actual activities of teaching results in that place of excitement and joy, the place where passion resides.

When all of these components come together in a perfect manner, a teacher experiences that incomparable joy and excitement that moves her to a spiritual plane. It is the "yes" experience that moves an educator to strive to reproduce that feeling. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes this experience as one of "flow." He views this as the "optimal experience where people enter a state where they are so

involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (p. 4). You have been there—when the class seems to fly by, you and the students are totally engaged in learning, and you wonder where the time has gone.

When you as the educator, the person engaged in teaching, are supported by your environment, using teaching strategies that are meaningful and successful to you and the students, you can achieve this sense of flow, this optimal state of inner experience which many of us view as spiritual in nature, and you can discover the place where passion resides for you.

Spirit/Passion

Attempting to further explain this moment, explorations are needed on both the meaning and the passionate response produced by the transaction. Underlying both meaning and passion is a spiritual dimension. In fact, if we look at the Canadian model of occupation (Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy, 1997), spirituality is at its very core. The individual's spirit is deemed to be the individual, the very essential nature of that person, that which the person finds meaningful. Consequently, everything else that the person does will be dynamically affected by her spirituality and what is being done will affect her spirituality. Urbanowski and Vargo (1994) have defined spirituality as "the experience of meaning in everyday life" (p. 89). This definition is profound in its simplicity. It allows us to understand that the daily actions of a person and what those daily activities mean to that person are what are critical. These activities may appear mundane to the observer but they are not. One has only to work with an individual who has experienced a loss in physical functioning and can no longer perform daily activities to realize how important these daily tasks are to how a person feels about herself.

Passion cannot be viewed separately from meaning as it is itself imbued with meaning, of a great intensity. For an individual to be passionate about something, she has ascribed significant value and meaning to it. "Following your passion" is a freeing charge that contains many emotional facets. What is understood with this statement, though, is an underlying enthusiasm, if not zeal, to pursue that about which one is passionate. No problems with motivation exist and with the driving force of intrinsically derived motivation, external motivators, i.e., resources, will be found to facilitate the journey of discovery.

When teaching has meaning for the teacher, the occupational performance (the action) of teaching and seeing the transactional results (aha) of teaching in your students is the flame of passion, a passion that is both sated and strengthened at the same time. It validates and increases the desire to do it again and to do it better the next time. This cycle is fueled by practicing the art and science of teaching and can be tremendously soul-satisfying for the practitioner. These cycles are what we need to attend to in both the teacher and the learner so that life-long learning can be fostered, meaning can be exemplified, and passion's embers re-ignited.

If teaching is an occupation of one's choice, it is meaningful. Peloquin (1997) believes the "...meaningful occupation animates and extends the human spirit..." (p. 167). That which one finds meaningful is also often a source of passion. Teaching a subject about which one is passionate does resonate beyond the self and becomes infectious. The learner becomes more interested, if not intrigued. The acquired knowledge is retained better. The feeling and animation which gird the delivery of information are what make it memorable.

Actually being able to teach what one is passionate about is a thrill. To combine the desire to teach with teaching the skills one needs to practice a former and/or concurrent profession is extraordinary. This pairing can often lead to a passionate performance and hopefully inspire/ignite passion in the learner, thus beginning the renewing cycles previously described.

Conclusion

Using the PEO model allows us to identify where the passion resides in the occupation of teaching. A careful analysis of the three components—person, environment, occupation—and their transaction enables teachers to evaluate themselves and the meaning the act of teaching holds for them. If all three of these components are aligned there can be an ensuing passion, what we are calling the meaning and spirit of teaching.

Roxie M. Black, M.S., OTR/L, is an associate professor and the director of the master's in occupational therapy program at the Lewiston-Auburn campus of the University of Southern Maine. She has taught in higher education for the past fifteen years. Her graduate degree in adult aducation (USM, 1989) has contributed to the enjoyment she experiences teaching her students at Lewiston-Auburn College.

Nancy MacRae, M.S., OTR/L, FAOTA is chair and associate professor of the occupational therapy department, a master's in O.T. program, at the University of New England. She is a 1989 graduate of USM's master of science in adult education program. That degree, combined with her clinical experience and love for teaching, have melded to prepare her for current position and helped her to keep alive the spirit of teaching.

References

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy (1997). *Canadian model of occupational performance in enabling occupation: An occupational therapy perspective*. Ottawa, Ontario.

Christiansen, C. (1997). Nationally Speaking - Acknowledging a spiritual dimension in occupational therapy practice. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 51*, 169-172.

Christiansen, C. & Baum, C. (1997). "Person-environment occupational performance: A conceptual model for practice". in *Occupational therapy: Enabling function and well-being*. Thorofare, NJ: Slack, Inc., 48-70.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Peloquin, S.M., (1997). "The spiritual depth of occupation: Making worlds and making lives." *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 51(3)*, 167-168.

Schkade, J. & Schultz, S. (1992). "Occupational adaptation: Toward a holistic approach for contemporary practice, part 1." *American Journal of Occupational Therapy 46(9)*, 829-837.

Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Urbanowski, R. & Vargo, J. (1994). "Spirituality, daily practice, and occupational performance model." *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy, 61(2)*, 88-94.

Teaching to Spirit

Jeremiah Conway

19

This essay is an exploration of what "teaching to spirit" means. It suggests that such teaching cultivates a reverence for questions, the learning of listening, and the importance of slowing down. Teaching to spirit requires a deepening relationship with one's students. Above all, this teaching seeks to recover our capacity for wonder. The essay concludes with some practical suggestions from the author's experience for moving education in this direction.

The title of this conference, "The Spirit of Teaching," interests me most when I approach it backwards, a posture not altogether unfamiliar to philosophers. I want to speak, in short, about teaching to spirit. It is teaching to spirit that is desperately needed in education today, and it is teaching to spirit that is systematically challenged by many of the ways in which we normally operate.

When I stop to consider what is meant by "spirit," I find myself forced to deal with another big word, namely, "soul." Soul refers to the deepest sources of our own energy; it is what impels us, what gives us life. Soul is the font of who we are. Spirit, as I understand it, is growing consciousness of this energy, such that it breathes forth, pervades, and grounds all the other dimensions of our life. Spirit is consciously relating to the world from our depths. Spirit is engaging the world soulfully.

If one accepts that there is this depth dimension of human experience, then teaching to spirit seems to require certain things. One must learn to give up any pretensions of certainty and finality. In relation to the spirit, there is no place for the authoritative "know-it-all." Given the impossibility of exhausting and, therefore, controlling spirit, one learns instead to invite it, to provide space for it. Let me suggest a visual metaphor for what I mean: while many other forms of teaching seem oriented to packing a room with as much stuff as possible, teaching to spirit is largely a matter of making room, of holding a space empty. Instead of constantly packing information in, one learns to be a better listener, giving attention not only to what is said, but also to what is silent and hidden. Instead of "covering material," as we so often do and at breakneck, ridiculous speed, one learns that better progress is made by slowing down, by dealing with less material but dealing with it more carefully and in greater depth.

Teaching to spirit demands a reverence for questions especially those which, recoiling upon the questioner, put the opinions of the inquirer at risk. Such questioning fulfills the all-important role of taking us beyond what we know, reawakening us, thereby, to the inexhaustible richness of the world we encounter. When one is rid of the certainties that haunt the daydreams of past and future, one is freed to listen and exist where one is.

Along with these other factors, teaching to spirit requires and reinforces our capacity for wonder. By wonder I mean something other than our ability to be astonished or amazed. The latter are states in which we are enthralled by something unusual, something out of the ordinary. But the wonder that teaching to spirit sustains lies precisely in the capacity to find the obvious extraordinary. Wonder of this sort is the ability to find the ordinary worthy of question, pause, and attention. Wonder recovers the questionability of the obvious.

None of these characteristics of teaching to spirit is reducible to a neat, well-packaged order or is a matter of replicable technique. You cannot go into depth with anything—and certainly not with people—without a tolerance and respect for chaos. The closer we come to human depth, the closer we come to real doubt, antagonism, fear, confusion, question, creativity, and passion. The gloriously messy.

Teaching to spirit recognizes that we are teaching people, first and foremost, not subject matter. Or more precisely, we are teaching to that place where disciplines and people interconnect. As we teach to this nexus, we discover that the connection is not simply an intellectual one; it is also a matter of the imagination and the emotions. Such teaching issues from the depths of our care and, for this reason, is able to speak to these same depths in others. In fact, this is the most important gift that teaching to spirit offers: it awakens and sustains care, a consciousness of why learning matters beyond financial and career payoffs. Unless we speak to why people care and encourage what they can creatively contribute, disciplines become inert bodies of knowledge, as well as clubs for the self-impressed.

When I boil down what I want to say about teaching to spirit, it comes down to this: it is the practice of loving one's discipline and one's students as fully as one can and allowing these loves to inform each other.

In terms of how to promote this, a couple of brief suggestions. Anytime I find that my teaching starts to become largely a matter of passing information I try to stop and rethink. Information, of course, has its place. But it is *never* primary. And this applies, to all disciplines and educational levels—not just philosophy.

I would love, for example, to see every one of the basic competency courses in the Core curriculum of this University—in other words, the remedial English composition and basic math courses—transposed into genuine question courses. Problems with writing are technical and mechanical, but they are not, I am convinced, primarily so. When students do not understand why writing matters, improvements of mechanics and technical skills are often begrudged, resisted, and forgotten as quickly as they are taught. Instead, make the English composition course an examination of the question, "Why write?" or "What is the place of writing in the composition of a life?" Have students read Tolstoy on "Teaching the Peasant Children to Write," read Mary Catherine Bateson's *Composing a Life*, Doris Lessing's *Prisons We Choose To Live Inside*, and George Orwell's marvelous little essay on "Politics and the English Language." Try the same in math. Take the gut remedial math course and turn it into a sustained inquiry into what mathematics is—as a

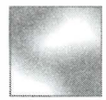
symbol system of the human mind, as a hunger for order and beauty, as a study of logic. Math intimidates many students because they have no clear idea of what they are studying and why it matters. I use these examples of English and math because if you think that teaching to spirit is a luxury of people in disciplines such as philosophy, I think you are wrong. Pushing our disciplines to consider their larger human significance, their place in human lives, is possible in any field and at any level. We must teach to this nexus.

Teaching to spirit requires deepening involvement with one's students. For me, this translates into finding ways to be with them, particularly outside of class. For example, over the past few years, I've run an evening film series, loosely tied to the particular upper level philosophy course I am teaching in a given semester. The films are optional; about half the class regularly shows up. I bribe them with popcorn. But the conversations about the films are incredible. There is no set point to get to, and no one is leading the discussion. The students talk differently than they do in the formality of a class. I learn about their lives; I have the chance to see what is really on their minds, and I can consider whether and how the material we are studying in class speaks to these concerns.

In conclusion, I want to come back to a claim I made at the outset: that teaching to spirit is desperately needed in education today. Why? Why this need? Let me offer two thoughts. First, if we fail to recover a discourse and practice of education as a spiritual activity, then other forms of discourse, already dominant in education, will simply drown it out. The most pervasive of these is the language of education as a business. The language of the marketplace already dominates higher education to such an extent that it has long since ceased to raise eyebrows, much less resistance. We grow ever more accustomed to a situation in which students are customers, having been recruited by aggressive, well-packaged advertising campaigns, purchase intellectual goods and services in order to compete for a larger "piece of the rock." Fail to teach to spirit and education will increasingly resemble but another filling station in the greater industrial park. This process is already well into its eleventh hour.

The second argument is this: neglect the cultivation of spirit—assume that education is about the making of money and careers and not about the making of human lives—and we find ourselves in the situation where we are putting awesome and increasing technological power into the hands of people who have never really considered the ends and the purposes for which this power will be employed. Without cultivating spirit, knowledge becomes an unlovely and dangerous thing.

Jeremiah Conway was the sixth holder of the Walter E. Russell Chair in Philosophy and Education at the University of Southern Maine. His Ph.D. (in philosophy) is from Yale University. He teaches in both USM's Philosophy Department and the University Honors Program. He is a tennis hacker, loves hiking, and plays a mean accordion.



The Spirit of Teaching in Story

Storytelling with Dogs

Margaret Jones

20

While winter camping with nineteen sled dogs, the author experienced the power of storytelling as a teaching tool. Drawing upon the work of Joseph Campbell, Robert Atkinson, Maureen Murdock, and others, Margaret Jones suggests that teaching through story perhaps comes most naturally to those individuals who risk living their own lives as a myth and subsequently invite others to share that story.

As an educator and trainer for the past thirteen years, I have struggled to find innovative ways to convey my material to my students successfully. In the beginning, I enthusiastically put flip charts on the walls and discussed theory, but discovered that their attention wandered. When I changed my approach and told personal anecdotes and fictional stories to embellish a topic, they came alive. It was a pivotal moment in my teaching career. I realized that my students wanted to participate. They yearned to connect with one another. They longed to tell each other stories as much as they wanted information. So I created stories as a teaching tool and developed a way in which they could tell theirs.

Storytelling is the oldest art form. It has been used since humans first walked the planet to convey meaning, transmit cultural values and to make sense of the world. Robert Atkinson writes in *The Gift of Stories*, "Stories carry a great power because we tap into ageless, universal themes that become deeply familiar to us when we tell our stories. Our stories are always variations of one of the thousands of folk tales, myths or legends that have spoken to us for generations of our inner truths" (Atkinson, 1995, p. xii).

Telling stories is a sacred act. Telling stories as a teaching tool may, in some situations, be transformative. As an educator I knew that I had to experience the world of story before I could teach it. So in the winter of 2000, I had an opportunity to live an adventure and teach storytelling at the same time. This is my story of how I came to understand the depth of meaning that lies in stories.

I awoke the day I was due to give a training to other professionals on storytelling. We would be camping with sled dogs in a remote area of Maine, and I was anxious. I wished I could call in sick but knew that if I called my co-trainer, Cindy, she would never forgive me. Besides, my husband would be coming, signing on when another professional had dropped out due to knee problems. With a sigh, I reached

for as many warm clothes as I could pack since I hate being cold. I looked out the window at my snow covered lawn, and realized that, in order to teach story, I first had to live it. As in the great myths, a hero/heroine starts at the beginning by following a particular pattern: separation from the world, penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return. Joseph Campbell, in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces (1956)*, suggests that the beginning is a time for preparation. Odysseus packed his belongings, looked at his navigational charts, and set out on his quest. He never knew if he would return, but if he did, he would be transformed. Like Odysseus, I was physically prepared for what I needed to survive and mentally aware of the anticipation of setting off into the unknown. He used a ship to sail across the sea; I was going to use a handbuilt ash and canvas sled and six Yukon huskies to travel in subzero temperatures.

When we arrived at the Mahoosic Guide Service that we had contracted with to lead us into the Maine wilderness, we were greeted by Polly, a seasoned, matter-of-fact woman in her late thirties. She was our guide as well as the owner of the dogs. Ray and Maggie were her essential support staff. Their job was to ensure that we were fed, dressed warmly, and ready to go when Polly was. I had a distinct feeling that they were our benign protecting powers much like Merlin was to King Arthur. They were going to safely guide us across the perilous frontier, a vast frozen lake to the door of our castle, a canvas tent carpeted with pine boughs and heated by a wood stove.

There were seven helping professionals committed to this storytelling training that would teach them to use story in their work to increase insight, build relationships, and promote bonding. Several had been winter camping before but most of us were new to this adventure and one had never camped before. We were all nervous, wondering what we had gotten ourselves into. Our next task was to outfit ourselves in appropriate winter gear; polypropylene long underwear, fleece pants, standard insulated army boots called "Mickey boots," and ski goggles. Once we put these on, I realized that our separation from the world had already begun. We stumbled outside and walked single file to the back of the barn to meet the 39 dogs. As soon as they heard us coming, there was a riot of sound. Some sat on the ground, threw their heads up and howled; others jumped straight into the air on all fours, barking incessantly. Their enthusiasm was stunning. They knew we were going on the quest together and they were excited. We learned each name: Kitmuk, a steady reliable lead dog who was tired at eleven years old; Kailey, part wolf who was shy of everyone except Polly; Bridget, with the sore paw; and Pretty Boy, a stud who loved to have his flank scratched. Then there were the puppies. Five months old and the size of German Shepherds, they were the offspring of Kailey and Lonnie, a newly retired lead dog. Within a few minutes, we were all on our knees with our arms around these beautiful creatures.

We loaded 19 of them and drove 10 miles to the edge of the lake. Lunch was served before we embarked on the first leg of the trip. Bagels, nuts, dried apricots, and warm tea, the elixir of life in a cold climate. As the tea slid down my throat, I gazed out over the frigid landscape and wondered if I was going to make it. In fairy tales and folklore, this was called "crossing the threshold." In Joseph Campbell's words, it was the beginning of the penetration to some source of power. I was leaving the protection of my familiar surroundings and setting off into the unknown. Who knew what danger awaited us? Would we be accosted by wild creatures in the night or would the bad weather engulf us? I didn't know. All I knew was that I was trusting my guides and the dogs. My thoughts were interrupted by Polly's impatient voice. "Time to get going." It was the beginning of a new horizon.

Ray strapped three of us in skis and we set out across the lake. Trailing behind us on toboggans were our precious belongings. We got into a rhythm quickly and glided easily towards our destination. Behind us, the dogs were being fastened to the sleds. There was a cacophony of sound as the dogs were barking and nipping at each other. They were eager to go. As soon as Polly cried out, "Tighten up, let's go!" the dogs lurched forward and fell into a concentrated silence. When they passed us, we could hear their unified breathing and Polly's occasional words of encouragement.

It was then that I hit my first obstacle. Often in traditional stories, the hero/heroine faces three obstacles with life-threatening consequences. These may include solving a riddle, crossing an impassable river, or doing battle with a dragon. In my unfolding tale, the obstacle was distance. Exhausted, I called out to Ray, "Are we almost there?" He turned with a look of concern and pointed to a speck of land in the distance obscured by the windswept snow. I wanted to cry. But I knew I had to force myself to go on so I pulled strength from deep within and kept going. We arrived several hours later to a warm fire and a snack prepared by our dogsledding companions.

We spent our evenings around the cook stove, cross legged on mats. After a delicious meal, we told personal stories of a first dog, lost love, ancestral births, a harrowing night spent on an island, fear of commitment, and trees. Our stories, much like ancient cultures who have used this art form, bonded us quickly and deeply. We had entered into the imaginal realm of story which paved the way for a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us. According to Atkinson (1995), there are four functions of stories. The psychological function is a way of gaining insight into ourselves, the sociological function affirms that my story acts as a connector to others, the mystical function allows my story and others to become unique and sacred, and the cosmological function connects my story to the universe. After telling our stories, we were indeed a world within a world. My night's sleep in a mummy tent on pine boughs was one of the best I had ever had. The dogs slept in rows alongside our tents, nestled in hay beds, heads tucked under their paws.

Early the following morning I was awakened by howling. One dog started a high pitched bark and the rest joined in a symphony of yips, barks, and howls. It grew in volume and then suddenly it stopped. There was a gentle snowfall when I emerged from my tent. The second day's chapter had begun. We ate a breakfast of pancakes, sausage, juice and coffee, cut wood for that evening, and washed the dishes in lake water. My husband and I were assigned a sled and given careful instructions on how it operated. We set off with Sonny, a black freckled husky. As we followed a narrow snow-covered trail into the woods it felt like the trees were guardians. Snow-laden arches guided us to the inner sanctuary of the forest. The deeper we traveled into the woods, the more magical it became. We had truly landed into the middle of a wondrous tale. More storytelling took place that night. This time it was spontaneous; one began a tale and the others filled in the pieces until we had a beginning, a middle, and an end. When I settled into my sleeping

bag that frosty evening, I was filled with the awe of the journey and the warmth of a community of storytellers.

Our final morning was filled with anticipation. Just as the hero/heroine must return from the quest, we, too, were coming home. Had we accomplished what we set out to do? Had we penetrated the magical veil and snatched the Golden Fleece? It was too soon to tell. With the wind picking up to 25 miles an hour and another trek across the lake with equipment-heavy sleds, we were facing the final obstacle. Dressing myself in everything I owned, I stepped onto the back of the second sled with Kango, an unpredictable lead dog. We set off with Polly's team in the lead. Immediately we got bogged down in deep snow. The path made by the skiers an hour before had already been obscured by the wind. The dogs were stressed. Just then, Kango refused to move and we had to put Kitmuk in the lead. She was remarkably steady for her age but struggled to keep up with Polly. The dogs kept looking over their shoulders for our help so we had to push the sled in three feet of snow and slush. It was exhausting. Again I wondered if I was going to make it. I imagined pulling my coat closer to my skin and lying down until someone came to get me. Campbell (1956) calls this part of the story, "The refusal to return." In our case, it was just too far and too deep. We battled wind and snow for what seemed like hours until finally we heard a sound in the distance. It was the gentle whirring of a snowmobile. Polly's partner, Kevin was forging a path for us, leading us back home. Just as in stories, the hero/heroine may have to be brought back from the supernatural adventure by assistance from without. Barking with renewed vigor, the dogs contributed to Campbell's definition of a life-enhancing return by landing us safely by the edge of the lake.

With a tremendous feeling of triumph we gathered in our final circle before departing. In turn, we filled in the blank of this sentence; "I have experienced ——— ———, and I know ———. With a cup of tea in one hand and a piece of chocolate we spoke from the wisdom of our three days together. "I have experienced the fear of being cold, and I know that a wood stove in the wild is just like being home." I have experienced the wonder of nature and I know how humbling she can be." We bonded one last time as a group and ended with a deeper understanding of ourselves and the natural world. As we said our farewells, the dogs slept quietly in their crates. They had done what they were born to do and now they could rest.

The majority of myths and fairy tales have happy endings. The hero/heroine adventures out of familiar land into one of darkness and danger. There, s/he accomplishes the adventure and returns from the "Yonder Zone." With a sense of satisfaction we returned to tell the story of what we learned on our quest. I learned that our lives are the stuff of great stories. Everyday we begin a new chapter filled with many turns in the road, and when faced with obstacles the only way out is through. Every evening, like all heroes and heroines, we have the opportunity to reflect upon our lives, to teach others, and accept it as the journey it is meant to be.

Margaret Jones, M.Ed., is the director of Prevention Services at Day One, a social service agency in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. She has twenty years of experience working with youth and families. In 1995, she helped to create the Storytelling Project which uses a combination of stories and interpersonal activities to allow participants to tell stories of their own. Margaret is also a teller of Celtic tales. If asked, she will gladly tell about her trips to Britain, the land of King Arthur.

For Further Reading

Atkinson, R. (1995). *The Gift of Stories*. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey.

Campbell, J. (1956). *Hero With a Thousand Faces*. Cleveland, Ohio: Meridian Books.

Egan, K. (1986). *Teaching as Storytelling*. Ontario, Canada: Althouse Press.

Keen, S. and Valley-Fox, A. (1989). *Your Mythic Journey: Finding Meaning in Your Life Through Writing and Storytelling*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc.

Murdock, M. (1990). *The Heroine's Journey*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc.

Zipes, J. (1995). *Creative Storytelling: Building Community, Changing Lives*. New York: Routledge.

Portraits of Family Literacies

Henry C. Amoroso, Jr.

21

The past 100 years have been a dramatic time in American education. Millions of poor and working class children were sent to public schools for the first time. For many, learning to read and write came with needless struggle. The nature of that struggle is documented in the personalized histories of the author's family. The author's grandmother never received fair and just acknowledgment of her intelligence. His father could read and write but never really understood why he failed in school. The author turned his back on books until he graduated from high school. Tragically, his sons' voices were nearly extinguished in school. The real power of literacy, a way to understand experience, was only earned through great struggle.

Twenty-five years ago, I read Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). A few years later, I read Jonathan Kozol's *Children of the Revolution* (1970). Both men had written about transformative literacy. Their thesis was simple: the starting and ending point of literacy is liberation from agencies that oppress the human spirit. I had often witnessed the oppression of the uneducated in the Caribbean during my years as a literacy worker. I wondered, though, if their social and political analysis of illiteracy was geographic; after all, their perception of reality came from their work in Latin America. This was an important point for me and so I felt obliged to test their theories in a North American setting.

I began to document the human side of illiteracy by talking with scores of men and women in adult education programs in Nashville, Tennessee. I developed a way to generate meaningful instructional materials based on the lives of adults. I also set up a prison literacy program in Nashville.

Following a summer of instruction at the prison, I asked participants to join me for a discussion about the program. Toby, one of the men who accepted my invitation, had not been allowed to participate in the regular education class at the prison because he could not read or write. He came to our meeting with an aura of strength about him and a smile that was strong and confident. At his elbow were several stories he had written. I asked him to tell me about them. He read me a story about growing up in rural Mississippi. He wrote it after his tutor, Lee, had read him an excerpt from Harry Crew's, *Blood and Grits* (1979). I asked him to tell me what happened. This is what he told me:

> I asked Dave [Dave was his cell mate] what was wrong with me, and he said I just need to learn a little more before I could do anything. So the next day Dave got me into a reading class, and the teacher did not mind that I could not read too good. He had me read some lines from a book and told me that I could read good and that it was a pleasure to be teaching me. That made me feel good, and also made me want to to work twice as hard. This teacher was so good and nice that he did not seem like a teacher. This man seemed more like a friend that cares about someone that tries to learn. He handed me a book one day and read just a couple of lines out loud and knew that I liked it. He said that his girlfriend gave him the book and that he has not read it yet. But if I like the book I could read it if I would not let no one have it or lose it. So I left and went back to my unit and started reading it and a week later I was finished with the book and gave it back. The teacher asked me if I liked it and to tell him about it so I began telling [him] about the book. And how it somehow changed me. Just a little. The teacher then told me that there was a good story inside of me and he wanted me to write a short story for him, so I wrote a story about prison and what I thought about it. And that story came right out of me. It was the first time I've ever written anything like that. So the next day I gave it to my teacher and he liked it, and said it was good, and that he wanted to read it to the teacher next door. So he did and she liked it. So then he told me that some day I might be able to write a book and be able to read as good as he can. This is all true. I don't know how to lie on paper and if I did I would not.

Thank goodness I had met Toby early in my development as a teacher. Although poor, illiterate, and in prison, he seemed to know what Paulo Freire meant when he said that literacy is an analysis of reality. I had never thought of this concept as a literacy worker so I was surprised to hear him tell me that *Blood and Grits* had changed him. What did he mean? In the process of talking with him, he told me he had identified with the anti-hero who had been victimized his entire life. Toby had felt out of place as well; now he realized he was no different than others. He was, in short, Harry Crews. Toby helped me understand something else about literacy and education: becoming literate was not a neutral act. Having read and written his experience, he discovered that his life mattered to someone. He simplified another concept for me. He had told me he didn't know "...how to lie on paper, and if I did, I would not." I still remember feeling weak and Toby wise as I realized what he meant—literacy was not a codification of skills, but a moral act of truth telling. Everything in his literacy was from experience because Lee had not sent him though contrived lessons. Toby had bypassed a "becoming" stage of literacy by simply expressing his perception of the world.

I applied Toby's truths to a new literacy program I started in Maine. The first thing I did was de-emphasize the organic word approach (Amoroso, 1985) I had developed. Instead of having tutors mediate student experience by writing books

for them, I asked them to use Lee's words: "There is a good story inside you." The results were dramatic. Writers produced four books of stories and poems that "affirm[ed] and engage[d] their contexts, histories, and experiences" (Giroux, 2000). As one of the tutors wrote in her journal, "This man has more than a story inside —he has a book."

Toby had shown me the secret to his literacy, and it went through storytelling that expanded and deepened personal experience. For the next 15 years I shared his words with my classes and my colleagues. Grants led to research and consultations locally, nationally, and internationally. I even contributed to the founding of two publications that published the stories of new literates.

Five years ago, I began to write a book, *Prosaic Messages*, about the ethos of school failure. The statistics on failure were depressing. So were quick fix solutions; missing was an integrated analysis that linked pedagogy, literacy, history, and social transformation. Remembering Toby's words, I wrote truthfully about my own experience. I started in the middle by writing about my working class education. I turned my back on books until I was an adult. I reached back a century to my grandmother's education in this country. Although intelligent, she never received fair and just acknowledgment of her literacies. From there I branched out to the histories of my father's assimilation into American society, and the education of my first two children. My father could read and write but never really understood why he failed in school. Tragically my sons' voices were nearly extinguished in school. The theme across our stories was clear: the real power of literacy, a way to understand experience, was not given freely to us. I followed the narratives with critical interpretation and possible solutions.

Prosaic Messages is nearly complete. Writing it has pleased me because it has helped me understand why some people succeed in school while others fail. At the same time, writing it has not been easy. When I started, I was unclear about my audience, and unskilled as a narrator. My first drafts were flat and ambiguous. Eventually, I learned to craft the ideas that were in my head.

I admit that taking a narrative, cultural, and historical approach to school failure is risky. After all, I offer little more than life experience. At the same time, stories capture subtle and complex nuances of experience that are not evident in controlled investigations. Moreover, the genre speaks directly to readers and is especially powerful in describing and interpreting roles in historical context.

My grandmother, Rose, was a young, single woman full of hope when she sailed for America. Within ten years of her arrival, her dreams were shattered: widowed, barely literate in English, she had three young children to raise alone in a strange, inhospitable land. Her life was immensely harder than it had been before coming to America. Now she labored daily as a seamstress in a sweatshop, and at night toiled as a cleaning lady scrubbing the floors of the county courthouse. It was tough, menial work that led nowhere. As she struggled, she could only think about her children and their future.

In the following chapter, set in 1912, I imagined Rose chaperoning children of striking workers from Lawrence, Massachusetts, to New York with Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. On the way, I have them talk about historical development, social and economic justice, and the education of children. Rose is particularly straightforward in questioning the tenets of Elizabeth's progressivism. In New York, Elizabeth introduces her to some of the greatest activists of the era: the anarchist Emma

Goldman, John Dewey and Francis Parker, leaders of American progressivism, the social worker Jane Addams, and the novelist Theodore Dreiser. As in a Greek drama Rose stands opposite a chorus, and engages in dialogue. The activists speak to her about big business, political corruption, freedom, and identity. The powers of scientific observation, not religious belief, they argue, hold the key to the future. Rose wonders if their future will work. Will children be taught equitably if American schools adopt Dewey's principles? Are art and literature the best way to raise the consciousness of the mill owners toward poverty and human suffering? Can Goldman's vision of a just society be trusted if freedom negates obligation? Whose vision is the truest? Rose listens, affirms their ideological passions, but moves on, confident in her simple, principled life.

The dialogues are significant because they bring to life the people who charted the course of schools and society in twentieth-century America. Some readers will find them plodding and suspicious. After all, unimportant historical figures like Rose almost never discussed aesthetic, political, or philosophical principles with intellectuals. Ironically, it is easy to forget she is the perfect witness to her time. In assimilating into American life, she had to choose between sharply divided ideologies: capitalist materialism or social justice; the rights of the individual or obligations to others; scientific progress or faith in the sacred; ethnic isolation or assimilation in to the dominant culture. Although she was unable to read history or political thinking, she used other methods to find her way. We see her in full voice: smart, serious, and unsparing of her contemporaries. Giving history back to her reminds us that her literacy was not found in her ability to read and write English, but in the way she responded to moral crises.

Rose Bosco and John Dewey on the Nature of Good Teaching

"Give a cheer for the girls. Marina, you are a true woman," Emma joked. "But there's another explanation about these special classes. The state abhors freedom. Massachusetts has laws that forbid teachers to marry or live wherever they want. Schools are a tool of the state. Their job is to enforce conformity. Does anyone seriously think politicians and businessmen want schools that teach children to think?"

Parker smiled and said, " It is not easy to teach the sons of men who labor in silence."

Emma wanted to correct this old romantic. "That is nonsense, and I will tell you why. Last year I went into the mines to read Ibsen to the workers. They understood him. Jane is right. Workers have the same capacity to think about their history, religion, and cultural heritage as the rich."

"I agree with each of you," said Dewey. "But equality is not a universally held sentiment. We are fighting against history. Plato said it first and best: only the brightest should be educated. He regarded the education of all others to be superfluous. Elitism is an especially dangerous idea in a democracy because each citizen must participate in the running of the government. Horace Mann understood this when he pushed for free schools

in Massachusetts. Unfortunately, the sheer numbers of immigrant children in our schools today undermine his vision. We cannot teach children who don't speak English or who don't want to be in school. That is why so many schools have adapted scientific testing to separate deficient children from more capable ones."

Rose turned to respond. "Elizabeth and I spoke about tests on the train. Just because you can't write your name doesn't mean you are backward."

"That's my point, too," Emma said. "But the rich and powerful want us to think that way. They don't want workers to think. Does the general want his soldiers to question his authority?"

Dewey smiled sympathetically for he had written about this subject many times. "Teachers need to train children how to think."

Parker elaborated by saying, "Teachers need the right tools to do that. Years of observation have convinced me that schools have failed to educate children because teachers use the wrong materials. Children still read stories about Elsie, Jimmie, and Fannie who live in homes with fireplaces and spend idle hours popping corn. These are children who walk along polished wooden floors to their own rooms to play with dolls, and teach tricks to their dogs.

"The stories are a lie. Adults sit in rocking chairs, knitting or reading or speaking pleasantly to their children. They serve them snacks, and take them on trips to the woods for Saturday afternoon picnics. Mothers also take them on adventures. Days are filled with idyllic walks in clean, white aprons past posted fences, old trees, and flowers. The children play with the farm animals, pick flowers, picnic in meadows, and gaze into clear running brooks. They also take trips to the seashore. Childhood is a time of discovery under the watchful eye of a benevolent mother."

"I only wish life was this way. Too many children live in crowded flats with tired, angry parents, their formative years filled with neglect and boredom. Besides, the books are filled with too many difficult words and too many phonetic markings. It is no wonder the children sink into despair as soon as they open them. The books defeat them."

Parker continued. "Textbook companies have lost sight of a simple fact that they are writing for children. Ironically, they hire superintendents to produce them. Most were men without any experience teaching young children. This means they cannot see things as the child does. So what do they do? They create texts filled with words covered with marks and crossed out vowels in the hope that children will learn how to pronounce them. It's so scientific. And so wasted. What they don't

realize is that children will only read stories that interest them."

It was Rose's turn once again. "I am puzzled. You want all children to go to school." Her friends smiled as they nodded slowly. "And you want teachers to train them how to think."

"You understand perfectly," Dewey said, wanting to get away from using a pedantic tone with her.

Staring at her water glass, Rose said, "This does not make sense."

"Miss Bosco," Parker said. " Do our ideas appear to be extravagant?"

"I live in America," she said with no emotion. "You do, too. You mentioned that you grew up in a clean homes with mothers who read to you in their laps."

"Yes," Emma shrugged with a hint of irony. "Our good middle class families gave us a bourgeoisie education."

"None of you grew up poor in rags, or dirty and tired from sleeping in a crowded bed. You grew up like the children in Mr. Parker's book. If I have children, I will not be able to give them what your mothers gave you. They will have nothing. That is a fundamental difference. You want teachers to do that."

Addams knew immediately that Rose was right. That is because she lived in Rose's world. Yet, she felt the need to defend the promise of progress embedded in her associate's thinking. She said, " Rose, you are right to speak about mothers. In fairness to John, it is too soon to know if his ideas will work."

"He will fail," she said with certainty. "Only a mother can love her children. Teachers cannot love my children. Your parents taught you with their hearts. If you care about my children, find a way to keep me home with them."

A dark cloud passed over Dewey's face. "That's Emma's and Elizabeth's fight. My job is to make sure all children learn from properly trained teachers."

With great dignity she replied, "Mr. Parker told us that as soon as he left Quincy, his teachers went back to the old ways."

"Science will fix this problem," he said confidently.

Rose squinted at him as she asked, "Have you ever heard of St. Bosco?"

"Can't say that I have," he said casually.

"He cared for the poor so much, he set up homes for them. "

"The same with Pestalozzi and Montessori," Parker blinked. "This is what I told my teachers in Quincy. You need to care about children first and foremost."

Dewey raised his voice slightly. "I expect teachers to love children, Miss Bosco. But nurturing is not enough. The truth is that teaching someone is very difficult when you don't know how to do it."

Rose's shy demeanor gave way to a truth she carried in her experience. "On the train, Elizabeth asked me about Sicily. She

listened to every word I said. She asked me more questions. Before I knew it, I learned things that made me feel proud. I felt smart like I was her sister. She inspired me with love."

In the fifth chapter of *Prosaic Messages*, which I have entitled "The Education of an Immigrant's Son," I profile the life of a school dropout in Depression era America. Like many other sons of immigrant parents, my father made it through grammar school but stopped going to high school as soon as he turned 16. Restless and motivated by the need to support his family, school did not interest him because his only goal in life was to have a few dollars in his pocket. Away from school, he built bicycles, walked miles to tend his father's grave, and worked several jobs to support his sisters and mother. Later in life he became a highly skilled craftsman and responsible parent.

Children continue to fail in school for the same reasons. Many of us label them irresponsible, unaware of their unique identities in the social world. The purpose of this story is to remind readers that personalized histories negate harmful stereotypes attached to children who fail in school.

An Unusual Education

Rose had a son to educate, so she said, "We have one more stop to make." They boarded the trolley, and within minutes Henry was fast asleep. When he awoke, he looked out onto the grandest sight he had ever seen. He trembled a bit as he shook off his sleep. He was in Copley Square in front of the majestic Boston Public Library, the oldest free municipal library in the United States. Designed by European trained Americans, it was a dazzling monument, equal to any work produced in ancient Rome. The style was Renaissance Revival, and it was decorated with motifs and the names of famous philosophers, scientists, and poets. Within were enormous reading rooms, majestic ceilings, glowing limestone steps, oak bookcases, dazzling murals, and busts of eminent authors.

"Who do you think built this building?" There was something aggressive in the way she spoke.

"Uncle Bosco?" he answered, watching the ants hurry along the sidewalk.

Rose reached over and touched his cheek. "I lived near great buildings in Sicily. I passed them on my way to school. I knew the men who built them. In the evening, I danced with friends among the ruins. Your grandfather was a great mason who built homes from plans he sketched on scraps of paper. My brothers learned from him. Now Sebastian shows the Americans how to build. Antonio does the same in Egypt. Uncles Erna and Garafalo are skilled plasterers who bring light to libraries like this one." A tear formed under her cheekbone as she continued. "You are small like your father so you have no chance to be like them. You also play too much. Forget about this crazy baseball. Pay attention to your school work. I don't

want you to beg for bread when you become a man."

"I hate school, Ma. Besides, I want to watch after you. I will never leave you."

She held his face in her hands. "Remember our trip to this place." She kissed him and then she drew him close to her. This was something she had not done in a long time.

I conformed to every rule and regulation in school. I studied hard, did my homework, got my papers in on time. I did everything except read and write on my own. Like my father, I didn't think much about books except as school subjects. Fortunately, I changed my mind after reading a novel a friend had recommended. I read it quickly, and then turned to another. Before long I bought three more paperbacks with my own money. Books finally meant something to me. I graduated from high school, and studied literature in college. The following excerpt from the chapter, "Education in a Working Class Family," describes how I discovered the meaning of education from two men in the workplace.

Literacy as Transformation

Hans was different because he read books. Nevertheless, Dad liked him because Hans had not forgotten who he was. He became my friend, too, a role model with a great deal of concern about my education. He stood in sharp contrast to the guy I had used as an earlier role model. This was Tim Steward, my floor proctor during my freshman year in college. Tim was a well-bred kid from New York City who had a famous dad. Tim wrote a column for the college newspaper, and edited our literary magazine. He was the only student to ace the advanced poetry class.

His first drafts were his final drafts. You could hear him typing late at night, and smell the smoke from his cigarette. He wore pin striped, button down shirts and cuffed, charcoal gray slacks. He always wore a sports jacket without a tie. He read *The New York Times*, and talked about art form movies, contemporary fiction, and Broadway musicals. Coming from the Upper West Side, he knew what it meant to dine in a four star restaurant. He had been to Europe twice, had interned at his father's newspaper, and spent summers at Flying Head Point.

He also had a liberal-chic side to him: uncombed hair, a distinct body odor, and penny loafers without socks. He reminded me of my Contemporary Fiction professor, a recent graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Both spoke in long sighs without direct eye contact. Tim was unfriendly and arrogant and unafraid to tell you he was brilliant. I took a deep breath whenever I spoke to him. Although he was afraid to get his hands dirty, he was most willing to pick apart my grammar. He especially talked down to students like me who came to college without a literary tradition in our background.

Tim was very different from the rest of us. For the most part,

we were working class kids who wore sweat pants to class, and ate at the Dairy Queen when we could afford it. We rarely read for enjoyment or put in long hours in the library. Our idea of current events was the latest statistics on the team back home. We hunted in the fall, went to Sunday mass, marched every Tuesday at ROTC, and cut class whenever we could. We went to college to please our overworked parents.

Although I had nothing in common with Tim, I wanted to be just as witty, sophisticated, and urbane. I subscribed to a literary magazine called *The Saturday Review*. I read *The New York Times Review of Books*. I even joined the Book of the Month Club. I started to drink coffee, displayed my books, and even experimented with smoking. Who was I kidding? I did not derive pleasure from reading literary criticism, nor could I tolerate contemporary fiction. More important, Tim's lifestyle cost money. Best sellers were expensive, as were the latest Charlie Parker records, movie tickets, trips to Montreal, dry cleaning, and five ounce hamburgers at Charlie's. I could not afford 'high' culture.

I needed a more down-to-earth role model. While I admired my father's distrust of authority, I found his closed-mindedness difficult to accept. Tim's sophistication was appealing, but as I said previously, his arrogance and narcissism offended me.

Hans combined education with a trade in an unassuming manner. He was passionate about ideas, and he was happy to share them with me. I knew I wanted to be like him.

This was not the first time I had found a role model in the workplace. Two summers earlier I had worked with an elderly Scottish mechanic in the shipyard. I dug out faulty welds from huge rings with a twenty pound hand-held hydraulic grinder. It was dangerous and numbing work. The deafening noise and foul smells of the abrasives scorching black steel filled the air. Mr. Cameron made sure I held my grinder away from my body. Otherwise, I would have sliced off my leg or something worse.

At lunchtime, I would leave exhausted to rest outside in the clear air. Mr. Cameron never joined me; instead, he went off by himself to read. One day as I passed him on my return to the work area, he asked me if I enjoyed poetry. His question caught me off guard. The only thing I thought about in this place was the 3:30 p.m. air horn blast to pack away my tools. "Um…of course…I like the Romantic poets. John Keats…bought a new biography about him last fall."

"Do you know who Robert Burns is?" he asked.

"Yes. He's a Scottish poet, isn't he? There is a statue of him near my church."

"That's right. Do you know any of his poems?"

"I do remember one that starts, My Bonnie lives over the ocean."

"Oh, you mean…" He then recited it verbatim adding two poems. He said proudly, "I know them all by heart. I eat with Bobby Burns everyday. I carry his verses in my pocket. You see this book?" He took out a small leather bound volume from his rear pocket. "I have had this book since I was a child. I take it every place I go. Bobby Burns takes me back to my childhood."

Both Hans and Mr. Cameron influenced my literacy development. They were skilled craftsmen who read philosophy, poetry, and history. Their literacies were not an expression of privilege, but a way to humanize experience.

The final excerpt presents a way to understand the human side of teaching and learning. My eldest son Perry faced a literacy crisis the first day he stepped inside a school. Born and raised in the Caribbean, he was immediately placed in the lowest reading group when we moved to the United States. No matter how much evidence existed to the contrary, his teachers considered him unskilled. For years he endured paternalistic and fragmented instruction. That is, until he visited his grandmother the summer he turned eight.

The Gift of Literacy

That summer, Perry's grandparents invited him and a friend to visit St. Croix. His grandmother knew he was struggling in school, and understood exactly what he needed. When he arrived she told him, "Perry darling, I want to see you with a book all the time. Carry one every place you go. Put it in your back pocket. And read from it every day."

She didn't doubt Perry's ability to read a book. She loved reading herself and had passed it on to her own children. She knew that the best way to encourage him to read was to give him a real book. She also knew that feelings mattered. She never raised her voice in anger or recrimination. Everyone around her was made to feel important. She was a remarkable woman who embodied the quiet dignity, serenity, and intelligence of the Caribbean.

Perry obeyed her command to read every day because he adored her. He stuck a book in his back pocket when he went in the car to shop or to the beach for a swim. At night he put it under his pillow. He read to himself and to his grandmother. After supper, he shared his favorite parts with her. They talked in a conversational manner without threat or tension.

Each day he got better and better. His desire to please his grandmother gave way to reading for himself. The more he read, the more easily he recognized words. He zipped across the pages, eager to find out what would happen next. Patterns appeared to him and soon he expected to see certain words. The story line became just as predictable. He would anticipate what come next, and read to see if he was right. For example, if a baby was left unattended, he expected to hear crying. Expectations pulled him from one page to another. He was suddenly reading words

that had stumped him a few months earlier. Tentativeness had given way to confidence, pauses and skips to fluency.

On the day he returned home, he asked me to buy him *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing.* I looked up from my magazine, puzzled. This was the boy who avoided reading. I could not imagine what had changed him. My mother-in-law was not a teacher or a reading expert so she could not have "taught" him to read. Reading fluency depended on translating letters and words into thought. At least that is what researchers and textbook writers had led me to believe. Perry's literacy challenged my instructional practices. His grandmother's dictum to "read every day" had given him the impetus to read. Adella had made him a reader by making him her reader.

Prosaic Messages interprets the historic and cultural roots, the social meaning, and the human cost of school failure. Failure is a social problem because learning does not take place in a vacuum. It is a psychological and economic problem because children who fail frequently become depressed and alienated and are less likely to find satisfying jobs than those who succeed. It is also an ethical problem that forces us to think about our obligations to the children we serve. For most of us, failure comes down to the search for a remedy. *Prosaic Messages* asks hard questions about current practices, and offers reasons why they do not work. It also offers alternative techniques that are based on dialogical processes, not chemical stimulants or the tearing apart of language.

This leads me to my final point. As my family's story suggests—from my grandmother's landing on Ellis Island in 1905 to my son's matriculation at the end of the 20th century—schools have tried to adapt to waves of poor immigrants, changes in the American economy, and the hegemony of the scientific method in decision making. Despite a hundred years of school expansion and reform, the historical record demonstrates that much has stayed the same. Gertrude Hildreth wrote in 1936, "No feature of public education is more universal than failure." More than six decades later, many children continue to fail in school for the same reasons they did in the past: boredom, isolation, alienation, and irrelevant demands that favor control over self-expression.

Henry C. Amoroso, Jr., Ph.D., is an associate professor of education at the University of Southern Maine. He has taught at Vanderbilt University, been a Vista volunteer and supervisor in the United States Virgin Islands, a Right to Read director, and classroom teacher. His areas of interest include critical theory, technology, school failure, and narrative technique.

References

Amoroso, H. *Prosaic Messages: A Portrait of Family Literacies with Critical Essays on School Failure*. Manuscript under review for publication.

Amoroso, H. (1985). Organic Primers for Basic Literacy Instruction. *Journal of Reading.* 28: 398 – 401.

Blume, J. (1976). *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*. New York: Yearling Books.

Crews, H. (1979). *Blood and Grits*. New York: Harper and Row.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Seabury Press.

Giroux, H. (2000). Personal Communication with the Author.

Hildreth, G. (1936). *Learning the Three R's: A Modern Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Educational Publishers.

Kozol, J. (1978). *Children of the Revolution: A Yankee Teacher in the Cuban Schools.* New York: Delacorte Press.

Hope Flowers School: Teaching Peace on the West Bank

Rita M. Kissen

22

This chapter tells the story of Hope Flowers School, on the West Bank of Jerusalem, where several hundred Palestinian students learn the lessons of peace along with a standard K-12 curriculum. Founded 15 years ago by Hussein Issa, a Palestinian social worker, Hope Flowers is a moving contradiction to the image of Palestinians as rock-throwing terrorists, and suggests the possibilities for peace education even in the hardest of places.

On a rocky hilltop above the West Bank village of Al-Khader stands a three-story building where Palestinian children and their teachers are learning to build bridges across 2,000 years of hatred and mistrust. Amid a landscape of dry, dusty hills, half-finished houses and half-finished dreams, Hope Flowers School is the realization of one man's vision that a new generation of Palestinian children could step out of the circle of "blood, tears [and] victims" and into "the other circle: cooperation, love, peace, respect" (Issa, 1999).

I first learned about Hope Flowers in the spring of 1999 through an Internet posting from an Israeli peace group called B'tselem. At that time, the school was threatened with demolition by the Israeli government because it stands on the wrong side of the "Green Line," the demarcation of land conquered by Israel in the 1948 war and theoretically available for Israeli agricultural use. As luck would have it, my spouse and I were in the midst of planning a trip to Israel that May, to help cement the University of Southern Maine's contacts with Achva College. Visiting Hope Flowers would be a way to pursue my long-standing interest in peace education and conflict resolution, as well as to learn about life in the Occupied Territories, which we knew only through images in the media and reports in the press.

This paper is the story of my visit to Hope Flowers School and of its founder and headmaster, Hussein Issa, a Palestinian social worker who started Al Amal child care center ("The Hope") in his living room fifteen years ago. The history of Hope Flowers School offers a moving contradiction to the image still fixed in many of our American minds, in which Palestinians loom as fanatical terrorists

filled only with hatred. And the story of Hope Flowers has much to teach us about the possibilities for peace education in the hardest of places. I believe we can all learn from Hussein's assertion that "we are not politicians, to make [a] magic solution, but day by day, step by step... to bring people together" (Issa, 1999)

Given the facts of his early life, Hussein Issa would seem an unlikely founder of a school based on peace and reconciliation. Though he came from a wealthy family, he was raised in a Palestinian refugee camp after his family's home was confiscated in 1948. There, as he told a reporter, he lived with hatred and resentment. "I lost my village, I live in a refugee camp, how can you expect me to be nonviolent when I lose my dignity and humanity?" (Kingsley, 1998, p. 8). But as a social worker for the United Nations, Issa began to believe that Palestinians "need[ed] a new education completely." He began to think about teaching Palestinians "more about Judaism, about Israeli culture.... Not like the stereotypes—the Jews, they have red eyes, and they have horns, and they have tails" (Issa, 1999). Most of all, Issa wanted to change the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations through the education of children. "To make meetings between the two people's children. To make meetings between the staff, the teachers, and between the parents, just to talk together, to eat together, to [have] fun together" (Issa, 1999).

In 1984, Issa put his dream into action. Al Amal began with 22 children in a rented room with no chairs. Eventually the school moved into its own small building, and in 1994 began a construction program "whose hopes were many times larger than its budget" (Hope Flowers, 1998). Today, the school occupies a three story building on a hillside just south of Bethlehem with students in grades K-12. Boys and girls attend class together—a sharp departure from traditional Middle Eastern custom. Though Hope Flowers is not affiliated with any religion, and educates students from Christian and Muslim families, Issa traced the school's philosophy to what he saw as the true message of Islam.

> The word Islam, the title of the religion, is taken from the word for peace.... One of our names for God is Al Salaam, the peace.... The person who carries this message carries the flag of peace, because he carries to the people brightness, good advantage, showing them the right way. (Hope Flowers, 1998a).

During the past few years, enrollment at Hope Flowers has fluctuated from under 200 to over 300, depending on the political climate. Israeli measures like border closings and restrictions on the movement of Palestinians prevent parents from registering their children and from going to work at the jobs that help them pay the modest tuition of $550 a year. Hope Flowers receives no money from either the Palestinian Authority or the Israeli government, and subsists on the dedication of volunteers, many of them Israeli educators, and international benefactors who help the school through grants and donations. Young teachers from the American School in Jerusalem come to Hope Flowers on Saturday, their day off, to help teach English. Regular teachers often go unpaid; the school has been repeatedly threatened with demolition, and any rise in the temperature of Israeli-Palestinian relations is reflected in road blockages and water stoppages (Hope Flowers, like the rest of the West Bank, is dependent on Israeli pipelines for its water supply). During a particularly tense time in 1997, when the Israeli Army

had blocked the road leading to the school, Issa himself climbed a mountain and walked through a forest to reach Hope Flowers, only to discover that the Army had also cut off the school's latest shipment of water. Like many peacemakers, Issa found himself the target of attacks from both sides of the Israeli-Arab conflict; in addition to the Israeli efforts to shut the school down, his life was threatened by Palestinian fundamentalists, and after he spoke out against the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1991, a car and a bus at the school were bombed.

And there are other conflicts, arising from the disjunction between the school's curriculum and the world from which its students come. The staff believe that the school's values of cooperation and nonviolence are essential for a new generation who can heal the ancient hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians. Yet when they leave school to return to the reality of their neighborhoods, Hope Flowers students may find those values less useful in the short term than the survival skills of aggression and self-preservation they have learned on the streets. Similarly, studying in an environment where boys and girls come to know each other as equals may be essential for building a more egalitarian future, but it flies directly in the face of the conservative Moslem culture to which many students return at the end of the day.

And yet, for all this uncertainty and conflict, the spirit of teaching thrives at Hope Flowers. The curriculum includes the standard K-12 math, social studies, science and literature, with an additional weekly age-appropriate lesson on peace in every classroom, from kindness to animals, to the negative effects of stereotyping. Recently, third graders at Hope Flowers have partnered with their Jewish counterparts at Adam School, a Waldorf School in Jerusalem. Last year the children went on field trips together and grew a cooperative garden. At the end of the year, teachers and children from both schools celebrated together.

> Everyone gathered here at the school and then we went on a walk together through the woods past Solomon's Pools and into the village of Artas. The walk was beautiful and then everyone returned to the school and we shared food that was cooked by the parents. As we ate, we sang together songs of peace in Arabic and Hebrew.... A few weeks later Hussein and Eitaf, the third grade teacher from our school, visited the Adam school in Jerusalem to attend their graduation at their invitation. Students performed many songs and Hussein was invited to speak a few words about the joint program between the schools (Hope Flowers Newsletter, July, 1999).

This year, third grade students from both schools have made weekly visits to Palestinian villages within the Green Line to learn about local culture and traditions, and fourth graders have visited the Jerusalem zoo.

The school continues fund raising, with plans to carry out needed structural repairs, and to build better cooking and toilet facilities and a playground for the children. The threat of demolition seems to have abated, but the school will have to spend $5000 to secure architectural drawings required by the Israeli Civil Authority. More than half the families at Hope Flowers cannot afford tuition, so money for scholarships is always an urgent necessity. In addition, the school has

begun a project called "Sponsor a Student for Peace," designed to increase enrollment in grades 8, 9, and 10. The school intends these scholarships "to counter the narrowing effects on our lives and minds by the Islamic fundamentalism in our area, by challenging families to choose education emphasizing openness and democratic values" (Hope Flowers Newsletter, June 3, 1999). Further, the school officials explain, preference will be given to female students,

> ...in order to do something to counter the trend toward early, arranged marriage in our society. This particular age group is the most vulnerable to this damaging habit in our culture, where once the marriage takes place, it means the end of the girl's formal education, and often, her growth as an individual. (Hope Flowers Newsletter, June 3, 1999).

Hope Flowers continues to reach out to the surrounding Palestinian and Israeli communities. Programs for the adult community of the Al-Khader and south Bethlehem area include regularly scheduled parents' meetings, as well as meetings for all interested adults on the topics of democratic elections, health issues, and other common concerns.

The school recently opened a guest facility on the third floor of the building, where, for $20 a day, visitors can meet local families, participate in the life of the school, and enjoy

> ...a unique view of the Holy Land—the limestone ridges of the West Bank to the south, the old village of Artas and its Catholic convent to the east as the Judean hills fall away to the Dead sea, and the growing community of Al-Khader and the close-by Pools of Solomon to the north (Hope Flowers newsletter, Oct. 99).

In March, 2000, Hope Flowers lost its founder and guiding visionary, Hussein Issa. While there is no doubt that the school will continue in the direction of peace, students, teachers and friends were deeply affected by Hussein's death. He had undergone heart surgery eight years earlier, and had said at that time that he did not expect to live more than ten years. Living on borrowed time, Hussein had worked relentlessly to further the vision of Hope Flowers. Ironically, in his final days he was a victim of the system of oppression and second class citizenship that he had worked to end. Eyal Block, Hussein's Waldorf School collaborator, sent this message to Hope Flowers supporters on March 4:

> A few days ago, Issa fell desperately ill and was taken to a local hospital near Bethlehem. There it was discovered that the hospital was dismally ill equipped to deal with his heart condition. At the last moment, an ambulance was called to transfer Issa to an Israeli Hospital—but there, he would not be admitted unless $5000 was paid up front. A Jewish rabbi paid one thousand dollars and Issa was grudgingly admitted. Two days later, the family got together another $1250—all of which covered exactly three days of hospitalization (over $700 a day).

On March 5, Issa suffered a second fatal heart attack. His wife, Hind, has taken over the running of the school, and in the March newsletter she writes of plans for special rooms to be named "Hussein's Dialogue Halls," where people from different nations can come together "to talk with each other and break down barriers" (Hope Flowers newsletter, March 2000). Construction projects have been put on hold while the school focuses on governance and curriculum, including a new board of advisors composed of Palestinian professionals with expertise in education and reconciliation work. Meanwhile, the dream lives on, as teachers and volunteers, Jews and Palestinians, and admirers and supporters around the world continue to nurture what Hussein Issa called "bright blossoms rising out of the desert of the Palestinian territories."

Rita M. Kissen is an associate professor of teacher education at the University of Southern Maine, where she also teaches in the women's studies program. She is the author of *The Last Closet: The Real Lives of Lesbian and Gay Teachers* (Heinemann, 1996), as well as articles on multiculturalism and peace education.

References

Kingsley, B. (1998). "Palestinian School Adds New Trouble with Palestinian Authority to Old woes with Israeli occupation," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs.* April, pp. 8-9.

Issa, H. (1999). Personal interview.

"Who we are, what we do, and why." (1998). Fact sheet published by Hope Flowers Secondary School (1998).

"Thoughts of Islamic education in peace and democracy: The approach of Al Amal Child Care Center and the Hope Flowers School." (1998). Fact Sheet published by Hope Flowers Secondary School .

Green Professor Blues: Reflections on Rebirth and Teaching

Desi Larson

23

This is the memoir of an experienced teacher who, upon completing her doctoral degree, moved to Maine and a new university faculty position. In those first few months most things that could have gone wrong did. But through the "blues" of crisis and suffering grew the flowering "green" of perspective and compassion.

This academic year marks my eighteenth year teaching. I've taught in contexts from pre-school to graduate school. I've taught in a Japanese school, a private K-12 school, and in universities. I'm a genuinely experienced teacher. Yet, I now realize, every year, every semester, I'm also a new teacher. I am green. It wasn't until I experienced a very challenging and humbling year that I appreciated the depth and complexity of teaching. And now, three years later, I still continue to learn from this arduous time in my teaching career.

Green universally symbolizes rebirth, growth, opportunity, and newness. Green is the color of life. But it is also fragile. Birth and rebirth imply both life and death. With death and destruction we grieve; hence the blues. Singing the blues demands reaching into the depths of one's soul. Deep in my soul I find melancholy, despair, and hope. Hope, because those who sing the blues are telling stories and teaching lessons.

This discussion, then, is framed by the tension between green and blue, between freshness and despair, between growth and regret. In his poem, "The Green Fuse," I see Dylan Thomas highlighting this tension:

> The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
> Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
> Is my destroyer.

When I think of this force in the context of teaching, the force is energy. This force, spirit, and energy both gives life and destroys it. It is yin and yang, hope and despair, the tension of blue and green. It is this energy that each of us—teachers from pre-school to graduate school, in Japanese and American elementary schools,

in private and public schools—get each time we are new at teaching. And I believe, whether we recognize it, or not, we are new each semester and in each class.

My father is also a teacher, and once he told me that what he most liked about teaching was the new semester. Each semester you get the opportunity to start fresh. But each time I walk into a new classroom I'm gripped by anxiety. Who are these people? What am I doing here at the front of the room? And increasingly, I ask: What am I going to learn from these people? What will grow here? And even: What will we grieve?

I'm a green professor, green teacher, green facilitator each semester. Although, each semester I come to the classroom with more experience, more understanding, and, as I mellow with age, more compassion. But some semesters I'm greener than others. Some semesters, all I can do is sing the blues. Some semesters the force is my destroyer.

My story of the first year I worked as a university professor is the one I want to share with you to illustrate the power of the force that through the green fuse drives the flower, drives teaching; and also, paradoxically, brings destruction to the creative process of teaching, and the reason why, sometimes, we need to sit in a dark and comfortable place and sing the blues. But, with destruction comes hope. I believe that hope is the seed of green in every blue teaching and learning situation. Just as in every teaching and learning situation of despair, hope is waiting to be uncovered. The story I present here, I believe, illustrates this.

I finished my doctorate in 1997 and was thrilled at the prospect of my new job as an assistant professor at the University of Southern Maine. This was my dream job in every way. On July 30th of that year I submitted the final draft of my dissertation and received the official letter that my doctorate would be granted in August. On the first of August, I loaded my two children and humble belongings into a Ryder truck and drove from upstate New York to my new home in Gorham, Maine.

The context of Maine was ideal; not only because of the natural beauty of the state, but my research interests focus on rural and community education. My passion for teaching was, and remains, deep; so my good fortune was enhanced by working at a university that is friendly and medium sized, putting students, and therefore teaching, at the top of the priority list. The students are diverse and from every professional and personal background imaginable. My colleagues are supportive, friendly, and have a sense of humor. I couldn't ask for a better context in which to teach and grow.

I had one month to set up my home, prepare for my classes, get the children ready for school, establish a research agenda, and make professional connections. The month flew by, but I made sure that the kids and I hiked many of the lovely trails that southern Maine offers. A few weeks before school started, my then six-year-old son, Zain, broke his foot. In retrospect, I should have remembered that when it rains it pours.

A few days before classes started I broke out into a rash. "Looks like poison ivy," someone said. I slathered calamine lotion on my legs and worked on last minute preparations for the semester. The kids had some new school clothes, I had my syllabi ready, and textbooks were in the bookstore. Zain was learning to use his crutches. But by the evening of my first class both of my legs were swollen and a hideous rash engulfed them from ankles to thighs. I remember being disappointed

that I couldn't wear the new suit that my mother had bought me as a graduation gift. Instead of the more professorial stockings and pumps, my feet and legs were wrapped in gauze and sandals.

I remember almost nothing of my first classes; I taught two, back-to-back, that Monday evening. What I do remember, at the end of my last class, at 9:30 p.m., is one of my students asked me if I was feeling all right and if there was anything she could do. "Please take me to a hospital," I said. By then, I was feverish and my legs were swollen nearly twice their regular size.

So, my first classes as a university professor are swathed in a calamine pink and gauzy haze. At the emergency room I learned that I had impetigo and a severe staph infection. The medical staff urged me to check into the hospital, but I argued that I had to get back home, my children were alone with a new babysitter. Arlene, the student who stayed with me through the evening, and eventually got me home around 2:00 a.m., stays with me forever as an image of compassion. I am sure that I learned more from Arlene and her patience and compassion that evening than my students did about theories of adult learning. My colleagues also showed compassion and support. Some brought us food. One colleague took Zain to the physician's to have his cast removed.

I made it back home and somehow limped through the next few weeks as I recovered. Certainly, nothing else could go wrong. But that semester was one of the toughest ones I ever had teaching. When I assigned group work, some of the groups didn't get along. I couldn't make any sense out of a seminar I was conducting. I over-prepared for every class I taught, frustrating both the students and me.

It would seem that there was no way that things could get worse. But they did. That winter, between semesters, an ice storm gripped Maine and much of the northeastern United States. As my children and I lay huddled under every blanket we had, and the temperature in my house plummeted to the 30s, I began to wonder seriously if this was a sign. Somehow, this had to be a mistake. I wasn't supposed to be here. We snuggled under the blankets in our pitch dark house as the huge pine trees outside cracked, banged, and snapped. I was sure our roof would fall in, but it didn't; we were one of the fortunate ones. The tops of trees and branches littered my yard. The contrast between the intense beauty of the inch-thick ice covering everything, and the broken branches littering the ground, brought tears to my eyes. It looked like a war zone. I had spent ten years of my life in a third world country, and another eight years on Guam. So I had my share of typhoons, floods, and other sorts of natural disasters. But nothing had prepared me for freezing cold and no electricity. Yet, in this bleak, cold time, there were kernels of compassion that kept me and my family warm. Neighbors and colleagues with wood stoves invited us over for moments of warm tea and companionship.

When the spring semester began, my electricity was back on, but there remained a number of faculty and students who still didn't have electricity, and wouldn't for more days or weeks. Yet amid this disaster, we kept on teaching and learning. Perhaps, now, even more urgently so. I began to realize that spring that we are all survivors, not just of one particular ice storm, but of a myriad of other storms we encounter in our lives. I began to see the students in my classroom, and the colleagues I worked with, as more human, because I could see myself as human and fragile.

I learned a lot that year, and continue to learn from that year. I learned to

question and examine the meaning of teaching and learning at a deeper level than I had before. Going beyond the content of the class to the wonderful complexity of personalities the constitute any class. I learned to begin to let compassion into my teaching, and to appreciate the role of relationships with my students and colleagues. The student who took me to the hospital, the colleagues who offered warm tea and support, these are examples of some of the green seeds of compassion that sustained me through blue times. Having a certificate to teach, or a doctorate in the field, gives one credentials to teach. But having compassion to teach, was for me, a process of rebirth. I've learned that teaching is about real human relationships.

I am still a green professor, although I continue to come to the classroom with more experience, more understanding, and more compassion. Yes, some semesters I'm greener than others. Some semesters I can sing the blues. But now I embrace being new and being green each semester. I embrace the storms and the blues, recognizing that the potential for rebirth and growth exists in each teaching situation and relationship.

Desi Larson is an assistant professor of adult education at the University of Southern Maine. Her teaching and research interests focus on adult learning, community development, rural issues, and technology and learning. She still enjoys hiking trails in Maine, but is very careful to avoid poison ivy.

Reference

Thomas, D. (1957). *Collected Poems: 1934-1952*. New York, NY: New Directions Publishing.

A Brief Note About the Walter E. Russell Chair

Dr. Walter E. Russell was the second principal of Western Maine Normal School at Gorham (1905-1940) and a teacher at the institution for many years. The University of Southern Maine is a successor institution. Winifred S. Russell, Dr. Russell's widow, endowed the Russell Chair in Philosophy and Education in her will, stating that the position is to be "devoted to the teaching of the subjects which were not only Dr. Russell's professional specialties, but the passion of his life."

Thus far ten University of Southern Maine faculty have held the Walter E. Russell Chair in Philosophy and Education, each for a term of two years. These faculty and their dedicated themes are listed below:

1981 Gloria Duclos, Professor of Classics
"The Many Mansions of the Humanities"

1983 H. Draper Hunt, Professor of History
"Lincoln the President: Learner and Mentor"

1985 William J. Gavin, Professor of Philosophy
"John Dewey: Philosophy as Context and the Context of Philosophy"

1987 Libby Cohen, Professor of Special Education
"What Socrates Began: An Examination of the Intellect"

1989 Willard D. Callender, Jr., Professor of Adult Education
"The Joy of Learning and the Reform of Education"

1991 Jeremiah P. Conway, Associate Professor of Philosophy
'91 "The Wasteland Grows: The Responsibility of Thinking"
'92 "No Forests, No Druids: On the Possibility of Educational Community"

1993 Nancy Gish, Professor of English
"Tradition, Cultural Capital, and the Limits of Critique"

1995 Kenneth Rosen, Professor of English
"A Spy in the House of the Thought Police"

1997 Kathleen I. MacPherson, Professor of Nursing
"Theory, Practice, and the Millennium"

1999 E. Michael Brady, Professor of Adult Education
"The Spirit of Teaching"

ISBN 0-939561-30-1

USM UNIVERSITY OF
Southern Maine
A member of the University of Maine System